VOICES OF THE PAST

FROM

ASSYRIA AND BABYLONIA

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PREFACE

THIS little volume has for its object to make a few difficult things easy—to peptonise, as it were, for ready assimilation certain valuable mental pabulum which is apt to appear hard of digestion.

To those who realise the essential unity of nature and of man no inquiry into the past can be entirely without interest; but there is, surely, a special charm in tracing the very beginnings of civilisation and the dawn of culture. Nowhere can this be done more satisfactorily than in Babylonia and Assyria.

In view of the elementary character of these essays, it has seemed unnecessary to cite authorities for every fact stated and theory expressed. None the less sincerely are thanks offered to all those scholars and authors—especially Professor Sayce, Dr Jensen, Dr Schrader, and Madame Z. A. Ragozin—whose published writings have aided in the preparation of the following pages.

In a work which lays no claim to high originality, perhaps the most novel parts are the attempts to give an exact, if simple, account of the nature of cuneiform writing, and to translate certain of the ancient poetic texts into English blank verse.

THE AUTHOR.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS,
September 1900.

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VOICES OF THE PAST

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ASSYRIA AND BABYLONIA

PART I

THE ROYAL LIBRARY OF NINEVEH

IF we were to take a voyage to the eastern end of the Mediterranean, pass through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, and then, sailing round the south of Arabia, pursue our course to the head of the Persian Gulf, we should arrive at the common mouth of two mighty rivers.

Ascending either of these streams, we should find ourselves in the midst of a wild and scantily-peopled country. For many miles a continuous belt of date-palms would border the river-banks. A boundless plain would stretch around us, with a terribly hot and unhealthy climate. To quit the river would be probably to perish for lack of food and water, or be suffocated in a sand-storm; and if we were fortunate enough to escape death by starvation, pestilence, or other natural agent, we should run a great risk of falling victims

to roving bands of robbers and marauders. It would be hard to believe that we had entered a land which once stood in the forefront of the world's civilisation. Yet all around us would be the graves of empires, regions that for ages supported a teeming population whose skill and industry had turned the desert into a garden. We should be in a country which was hoary with antiquity when what we often call ancient nations were as yet unborn.

In this venerable land there sprang, as from a common cradle, many infant races whose splendid maturity was destined to influence all the after-history of the world.

The two great rivers are the Tigris and the Euphrates, and between them lies the country called by the Greeks Mesopotamia. In the antiquity of its civilisation and culture this land has but one rival in the world—Egypt; and it is doubtful whether even Egypt is quite as old.

Students of the Nile-land are perhaps right in pointing out certain pre-historic traces there as unequalled for antiquity by anything yet found in Mesopotamia; but, on the other hand, recent discoveries in the latter country seem to push back the dawn of genuine history in Chaldæa to a date at least as remote as that of the earliest historic monuments of Egypt. Possessed each of so much glory, the rivals can well afford to be generous to one another.

We may roughly divide the whole region

watered by the Tigris and Euphrates into two parts :—

(1) The Upper Region, or Hill-country—Assyria,
(2) The Lower Region, or Alluvial Plain—Chaldæa.

In both of these, great cities once flourished. Crowds of busy men and women dwelt for thousands of years on the river-banks, and a high proficiency in arts and even sciences was attained centuries and centuries before Christ. Powerful monarchies carried conquest far beyond their own borders in every direction. Stupendous palaces and temples rose, embellished with *miles* of bas-reliefs, and countless inscriptions; and all was life, vigorous growth, and glory.

But how are the mighty fallen! A few wretched villages, inhabited by squalid Arabs, with here and there a poor and sleepy Mohammedan town, and a few wandering Bedouin tribes, are at the present day almost the sole representatives of the splendour of the past.

It is a remarkable fact that our knowledge, *i.e.* our real and reliable knowledge, of these ancient peoples is of the most recent origin. Sixty years ago we were in total ignorance of the history of Assyria and of the yet more ancient history of Chaldæa. What was the cause of this? It is not the case with all eastern nations of antiquity. Take the Jews, for example. There has never been a time when the history of this extraordinary people has been unknown, or inaccessible, to the living world.

But the Assyrians! Till a few years ago they were little but a name; and Assyrian history (so called) was a jumble of fragmentary and mythical stories, as unlike the truth as the legend of Romulus and Remus, sons of the War-god and suckled by a she-wolf. It is true that the names and deeds of a few Assyrian monarchs, such as Sennacherib, are preserved for us in the books of the Old Testament; and very valuable and picturesque are the brief allusions to Assyrian men and manners which those books contain. But they are merely passing notices, furnished by an alien race with whom the Assyrians were, for some of the best of reasons, on the very worst of terms. How much impartiality and correct appreciation could Englishmen and Frenchmen have been expected to show in their estimate of each other during the Napoleonic wars?

If we seek an explanation of the entire disappearance of the records of many ancient peoples, we shall find it in the wars of conquest and extermination which went on in the distant past. The Assyrians, for example. After centuries of power and greatness they were at last overthrown by the combined attack of some of their bitterest foes. An alliance between the Medes and Babylonians resulted in the utter annihilation of the Assyrian Empire. Their great cities were sacked, burned, razed to the ground, "made heaps of" (to quote the language of the inscriptions); and those shapeless, apparently unmeaning heaps that rise from the surface of the plain, and around

which the rubbish of twenty-five centuries has slowly accumulated, remained till our own day as almost the sole memorials of the vanished people.

The fall of Nineveh and of the Assyrian Empire took place about B.C. 606. When, only two hundred years later, a Greek army passed by the site of Nineveh on its retreat from the ill-fated expedition of Cyrus against his brother Artaxerxes, all that they found there was a vast deserted city surrounded by a high wall. Xenophon,* the Greek officer who wrote an account of this expedition, calls the city Mespila, and gives an absurdly incorrect story about its capture, little dreaming that this was the great Nineveh itself, the capital of the once mighty Assyrian Empire.

And so one nation succeeded another in the lordship of this part of the earth. Assyrian was followed by Mede, Mede by Persian, Persian by Greek; and our knowledge of Assyria, until quite recent years, was all derived from the garbled narratives which the Greeks picked up from the later races that inhabited the ancient lands.

But now all is changed. What was utterly unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and throughout eighteen centuries of the Christian era, has been revealed to us. Perhaps no department of human investigation has proved more brilliantly successful, in the face of stupendous difficulties, than the

*Anabasis, iii. 4.

opening up and comprehension of these storehouses of the past in Assyria and Chaldæa. The patient labours of Layard, George Smith, Sir Henry Rawlinson, Lenormant, Jensen, and a number of other Assyriologists, have been crowned with the victory they deserved. Our museums possess priceless and almost countless treasures as the results of their toil ; and the annals of the ancient peoples, written in a manner of which a little more will be said by-and-bye, are now deciphered with an almost unerring accuracy.

It is indeed a strange and interesting thought that we in this late age of the world are, for all practical purposes, far closer to the old civilisations of Mesopotamia than any of the people who have lived a thousand or two years before us. We can read records of Assyrian and Babylonian history which a Greek or Roman would have found utterly unintelligible, and can thus possess ourselves of a knowledge of those ancient peoples such as no Greek or Roman, though situated so much nearer to the events in respect both of time and place than ourselves, could ever dream of attaining. Such are the achievements of our own century in this wonderful field of research, and we may feel justly proud of them.

Now to approach the special subject of this chapter. One of the last of the kings of Assyria was named Asshurbanipal. He reigned from B.C. 668 to B.C. 626. That we may fix this

period clearly in our minds, let us ask what was going on just at this time in some other parts of the world with which we are more familiar.

What was Rome doing during the period in question? She was still in her infant days, still under her kings. No thought of empire was yet in her mind, for the whole of her republican and imperial ages lay still before her.

Then Greece. Solon had not yet given laws to Athens, and a century and a half had still to roll by before the victories of Marathon and Salamis would gloriously vindicate the liberties of the land.

In Palestine the northern kingdom of Israel had, indeed, been extinct for many years when Asshurbanipal ascended the throne of Assyria; but in the southern part of the country Judah was still ruled over by the house of David in the persons of the later kings, and the name of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, occurs in the contemporary inscriptions both of Asshurbanipal and his father.

Asshurbanipal was the grandson of that Sennacherib whose name is well known to every reader of the Old Testament. Like most Assyrian monarchs, he had a passion for building, and he reared for himself a splendid palace at Nineveh. This was first discovered by Sir Henry Layard. On careful examination it proved to be not so much a really new palace as a restoration and

enlargement by Asshurbanipal of the palace of his grandfather, Sennacherib.

If it is creditable to be a pioneer in a good work, high honour is due to a Mr Rich, who in 1820, while acting as representative of the East India Company at Baghdad, made the earliest attempts to measure and dig into the mounds near the Euphrates and Tigris.

As he had no resources but his own, his success was not great. The few antiquities, however, which he managed to unearth were placed in the British Museum, where they formed the nucleus of the present magnificent collection of Assyrian and Babylonian monuments.

For twenty years after Rich's efforts nothing more was done.

But in 1844 a Frenchman, named M. Botta, after various unsuccessful attempts to find anything of importance at a place called Koyunjik (the site of Nineveh), devoted his attention to the mound of Khorsabad, which lay a few miles to the north. He did this at the suggestion of a peasant who told him that at the latter spot (where his own village stood) fragments of alabaster and pottery were continually being dug up in the foundations of the houses.

So M. Botta at once began operations at Khorsabad, and before long important discoveries were made. A trench was dug from the outside straight into the mound; and this was found to lead into a hall lined all round with carved slabs representing in bas-relief a

Fig. 1.—VIEW OF KOYUNJIK, THE SITE OF NINEVEH.

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variety of military operations. It was the revelation of a new world, or rather of an old and long forgotten world recalled unexpectedly to life. Well might M. Botta exult at the thought that his were the first of modern eyes to cross the gulf of two thousand five hundred years, and gaze on the splendour of an Assyrian palace.

One of the first to hear of these startling discoveries at Khorsabad was Sir Henry Layard—not then Sir Henry, but an ardent young scholar travelling in the East. He at once decided to explore a large mound called by the Arabs Nimrud, situated lower down the Tigris, and on which he had long had a covetous eye.

Sir Stratford Canning, at that time British ambassador at Constantinople, had such confidence in the undertaking that he offered much pecuniary help, and, with a certain amount of assistance from the home authorities, the enterprise was commenced in November 1845.

It was indeed an arduous undertaking. Perpetual camping out, with few comforts, and a climate that brought on fevers and other forms of sickness, were in themselves no trifle. But the difficulties were greatly increased by the opposition of the local Turkish authorities. The Pasha at Mosul, a town close to the site of Nineveh, was, owing to his harshness and rapacity, the terror of the country. His instructions to his tax-collectors were "Go, destroy,

eat!" (*i.e.* "plunder"); and for his own private advantage he had re-established, among other obsolete imposts, one called "tooth-money." This interesting tax is defined by Layard, in his work on Nineveh, as "a compensation in money, levied upon all villages in which a man of such rank is entertained, for the wear and tear of his teeth in masticating the food he condescends to receive from the inhabitants."

Soon after Layard had begun to systematically explore the great mound of Nimrud, the Pasha learned that among the objects dug out were a few bits of gold leaf. The whole matter seemed clear to him in a moment. "Ah! ha!" thought he, "what the Englishman is seeking is hidden treasure, not old broken stones, as he pretends. This must be stopped."

But Layard was equal to the occasion. "Keep your own agent," said he, "at the spot, and if any precious metals come to light, let him take them in charge." This appeared to settle the question. But the Pasha was an ingenious man, and in a few days sent word that the work must really go no further, as the diggers were disturbing a most holy Mohammedan burying-ground. What could Layard reply? It was true that tombs had just been met with in the course of the work. But one of the Pasha's own officers came to the rescue, by confidentially informing Layard that the troublesome tombs were counterfeit ones, and that he had received secret orders from the Pasha to have them manufactured.

This fabrication of sham tombs is an inventive stroke that would hardly have occurred to the dull Western mind. Fortunately, governors are not irremovable, nor all alike. The Pasha of Mosul was soon afterwards recalled by his government, and a man of a totally different character succeeded to his post.

The simple inhabitants of these wild countries were greatly puzzled by the zeal with which the English explorer pursued his task, to them so unintelligible. And when at last one of the huge winged bulls, now at the British Museum, was about to be dragged to the bank of the Tigris, placed on a raft, and floated down the river, an Arab Sheikh could restrain himself no longer, and thus addressed Layard: "In the name of the Most High, tell me, O Bey, what you are going to do with these stones. So many thousands of purses spent on such things! Can it be, as you say, that your people learn wisdom from them? Or is it, as his reverence the Cadi declares, that they are to go to the palace of your Queen, who, with the rest of the unbelievers, worships these idols? As for wisdom, these figures will not teach you to make any better knives, or scissors, or chintzes; and it is in the making of these things that the English show their wisdom."

Pleasant was the work during the brief but beautiful spring-time, when the air was fresh and breezy, and the plains covered with a gor-

geous carpet of many-coloured flowers. But the heat and prolonged drought of summer were terrible. At Baghdad the temperature sometimes reaches 120° in the shade, and though the heat is not quite so great in Assyria, it is often intensely trying, and rendered still more intolerable by the frightful sandstorms which prevail.

To obtain an idea of the precise manner in which the explorers attacked the mounds where lay the priceless treasures of antiquity which they had come to unearth, we cannot do better than listen to a brief account given by Madame Zenaïde A. Ragozin in "Chaldea" ("Story of the Nations" series):

"The simplest way to get at the contents of a mound would be to remove all the earth and rubbish by carting it away,—a piece of work which our searchers might no doubt have accomplished with great facility, had they had at their disposal a few scores of thousands of slaves and captives, as had the ancient kings who built the huge constructions the ruins of which had now to be disinterred. With a hundred or two of hired workmen, and very limited funds, the case was slightly different. The task really amounted to this: to achieve the greatest possible results at the least possible expense of labour and time, and this is how such excavations are carried out on a plan universally followed everywhere as the most practical and direct:

"Trenches, more or less wide, are conducted

from different sides towards the centre of the mound. This is obviously the surest and shortest way to arrive at whatever remains of walls may be imbedded in it. But even this preliminary operation has to be carried out with some judgment and discernment. It is known that the Chaldeans and Assyrians constructed their palaces and temples not upon the level, natural soil, but upon an artificial platform of brick and earth at least thirty feet high. This platform was faced on all sides with a strong wall of solid burned brick, often, moreover, cased with stone. A trench dug straight from the plain into the lower part of the mound would consequently be wasted labour, since it could never bring to anything but that same blind wall, behind which there is only the solid mass of the platform. Digging therefore begins in the slope of the mound, at a height corresponding to the supposed height of the platform, and is carried on straight across its surface until a wall is reached,—a wall belonging to one of the palaces or temples. This wall has then to be followed, till a break in it is found, indicating an entrance or doorway. The burrowing process becomes more and more complicated, and sometimes dangerous. Shafts have to be sunk from above at frequent intervals, to introduce air and light into the long and narrow corridor; the sides and vault have to be propped by beams to prevent the soft earthy mass from falling in and crushing the diggers. Every shovelful of earth cleared away is removed in baskets which are

passed from hand to hand till they are emptied outside the trench, or else lowered empty and sent up full through the shafts by means of ropes and pulleys, to be emptied on the top.* When a doorway is reached, it is cleared all through the thickness of the wall, which is very great; then a similar tunnel is conducted all along the inside of the wall, the greatest care being needed not to damage the sculptures which generally line it, and which, as it is, are more or less injured and cracked, their upper parts sometimes entirely destroyed by the action of fire. When the tunnel has been carried along the four sides, every doorway or portal carefully noted and cleared, it is seen from the measurements,—especially the width —whether the space explored be an inner court, a hall, or a chamber. If the latter, it is sometimes entirely cleared from above, when the rubbish frequently yields valuable finds in the shape of various small articles. One such chamber, uncovered by Layard at Koyunjik, proved a perfect mine of treasures. The most curious relics were brought to light in it: quantities of studs and small rosettes in mother-of-pearl, ivory, and metal (such as were used to ornament the harness of the war-horses), bowls, cups, and dishes of bronze, besides caldrons, shields, and other items of armour, even glass bowls; lastly, fragments of a

* Mr Haynes, of the Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, tells us that one single section excavated contained more than 60,000 cubic feet of earth, which had to be carried away in basketfuls a distance of 130 yards, and at the same time to be raised to a height of 50-80 feet.

royal throne—possibly the very throne on which King Sennacherib sat to give audience or pronounce judgments."

We have seen that Layard's first efforts were directed to the mound of Nimrud, where lay entombed the remains of the ancient city of Kalah (Calah, Gen. x. 11); but he was not satisfied till he had, in his second exploration, devoted his attention to the great mound of Koyunjik, the site of Nineveh itself. Here it was that Sennacherib's palace was brought to light; and here, too, the palace of his grandson Asshurbanipal, situated on almost the same site, was laid open to the modern world. Sennacherib's was the largest and most imposing palace ever reared by an Assyrian king. The state apartments were lined with sculptured slabs, representing scenes of the monarch's life, in the greatest variety, and characterised by the most emphatic realism. Every detail is truthfully portrayed to the height of the artist's skill, and with a conscientiousness that would satisfy the most exacting Pre-Raphaelite. The sculptor endeavours to produce, as it were, photographs of the life of the times. Trees of clearly distinguished species, gardens, ponds, wild animals, birds, fish, boatmen, peasants, all appear on these palace reliefs in careful detail. We see the everyday life of the court —lines of attendants, for instance, bringing in the dishes for the royal dinner; or we are shown the whole process of the manufacture, conveyance, and erection of a huge stone bull, from the moment

when the rough, unhewn mass emerges from the quarry till the completed colossus stands in placid dignity before a palace gateway.

But though Sennacherib's was the largest of Assyrian palaces, that of his grandson Asshurbanipal was even more wonderful in the skill displayed in its ornamentation; for this was the culmination-point of Assyrian art. Space does not

Fig. 2.—DYING LION, BAS-RELIEF FROM PALACE OF ASSHURBANIPAL.

allow us to dwell upon this extensive and fascinating subject; but all who feel any interest in such matters are strongly advised to visit the Assyrian rooms of the British Museum, especially a fine and well-lighted hall called the Assyrian Basement, where they will see quantities of beautifully executed and excellently preserved bas-reliefs of this period. The hunting scenes are of peculiar merit and interest. From the earliest times the people of Mesopotamia excelled in the delineation

of animal forms and movements. Their human figures are less successful, being generally stiff, formal, and conventional. The reason of this seems to have been that they did not, like the Greeks, delight in studying from the nude. They were, therefore, unacquainted with all the possibilities that attend the treatment of the human form, and its infinite varieties of grace, power, and movement. Instead of the body, they too often depict the clothing, and that with boundless care and pains. But out in the desert, among the river-reeds, or on the rocky slopes of the mountains, they beheld nature untrammelled, free limbs and bounding forms, unconcealed by artificial coverings and trappings. The artist's eye quickly grasped the correct anatomy of these wild asses, antelopes, and lions, and with ready skill transferred them to stone. And thus, all through the long ages of Mesopotamian culture down to the days of Asshurbanipal, animals are always the masterpieces of Babylonian and Assyrian art.

It was whilst Layard was engaged in opening up Asshurbanipal's sumptuous palace at Koyunjik that he made the surprising discovery which has given occasion to the present chapter. His excavations brought him upon two chambers of no great size, but the floor of which was entirely strewn with little tablets of terra-cotta, generally in a fragmentary condition and covered on both sides with writing. In short, he had found the King's Library. The layer of fragments was more

than a foot deep, and due to the falling in of the upper part of the building. The tablets, so sadly mutilated, were the books of the Library, and in the old days of Assyrian greatness had been arranged in orderly rows along the walls, or, perhaps, in an upper storey. But when the palace was destroyed by ruthless and vindictive foes, the books were thrown down, shattered and broken, and thus they came at last to be found lying in utter confusion upon the ground.

Layard was quite unable to read the clay books which he had been so happy as to discover. But of course he perceived their value, and, filling many cases with the fragments, despatched them to the British Museum. There they remained for years, undeciphered and unarranged. To put them into order and draw out their meaning was, indeed, so colossal a task that it appalled the bravest.

But in the meantime the decipherment of similar inscriptions was making steady progress; and at last an archæologist connected with the British Museum, named George Smith, was inspired to enter upon the vast endeavour and seriously attack the Koyunjik tablets.

The British Museum was at this time editing a great work called "Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia," of which five splendid volumes have already appeared. The texts, of which the originals were in some cases on stone and in others on clay, were reproduced by wood-engraving, and George Smith, who was not at first a scholar, but

an engraver, took an important part in the preparation of the wooden blocks from which the magnificent sheets were to be struck off. But this mechanic toil, useful and beautiful as it was, did not satisfy the young and ambitious craftsman. So he set to work to acquire, from the works of those who had already studied them, a knowledge of the language and system of writing represented on the tablets he was copying. And by-and-bye he was able to see meaning in the Koyunjik fragments, and to ascertain which of the separated pieces belonged to each other. He joined many together, and thus completed whole pages with but trifling defects. And sometimes, having the good fortune to come across duplicate copies of the same inscription, he enabled one copy to supply the deficiencies of another.

So great was George Smith's success, that the proprietors of *The Daily Telegraph*—to their lasting honour—felt justified in sending him out to Assyria, at their expense, to carry on further investigations at the spot which had yielded such a mass of literary treasures. Arrived at Koyunjik, he went at once to the Royal Library of Asshurbanipal, re-opened it, and brought away another great batch of fragments.* On examination of these he had the joy—such as only an enthusiast can know—of finding that among them were some of the missing links which he most needed to

* Certain cases of tablets at the British Museum which bear the name of *The Daily Telegraph* attest the success which crowned this enterprise.

complete his collection. Again he went out to Assyria; again he returned with fresh spoils; and then set off on a third similar expedition. But alas! his bright hopes were doomed to disappointment, and science was fated to lose one of her noblest and most promising sons. At the early age of thirty-six he was cut off in Syria by the plague, leaving the life's work he loved so well, only, as it were, just begun, and followed by the undying regrets of Oriental scholars in every quarter of the globe.

And now, if we turn our attention to the books of this strange old-world Library, we shall at once be struck with their entire unlikeness to anything which we call a book to-day. They are not composed of paper, cloth, or even parchment. Had they consisted of such perishable materials, they would have long ago succumbed to the destructive forces to which they have been subjected during these twenty-five centuries. But they were formed, as we have seen, of baked clay, which is proof against almost all atmospheric corrosion, and which even fire and water cannot easily injure.

A glance at the show-cases of the British Museum reveals a considerable variety in the form and size of the tablets. The larger ones are nearly flat, and in length and breadth considerably exceed one of the pages of the present book, with a thickness of more than half-an-inch.

But the great majority are far smaller, though not much thinner, with a convex surface and a

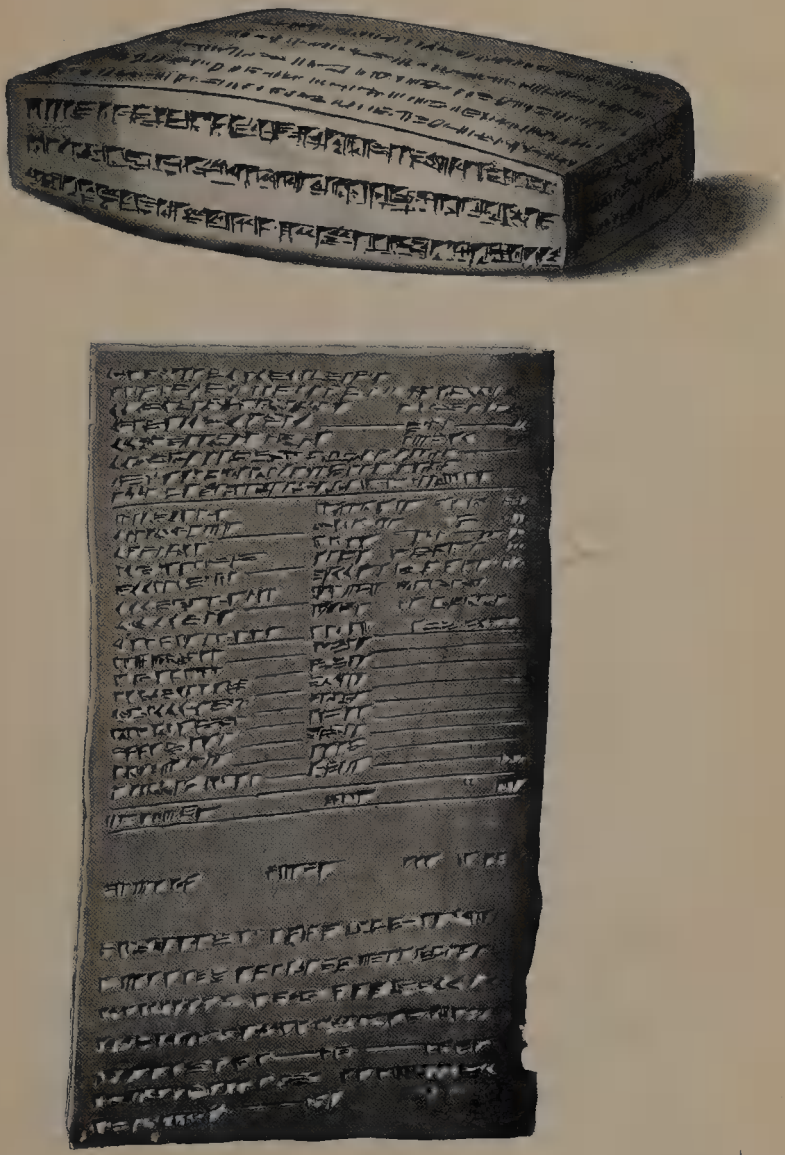

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Fig. 3.—ASSYRIAN CLAY TABLETS.

general resemblance to cakes of soap; and a few do not exceed an inch in length. The characters upon them, though occasionally careless and clumsy, are in a far greater number of cases remarkably sharp and clear; and though they are at times so minute as to be scarcely legible without optical aid, there is rarely any difficulty in distinguishing them unless the surface of the tablet has undergone injury. It is interesting to note that among the ruins of Assyrian cities lenses have been found, which were perhaps used to assist the sight of the ancient scribes. In considering the excessive fineness which often characterises the writing, one is inclined to conclude that, as nothing could have been cheaper than clay in Mesopotamia, it must have been a spirit of professional emulation which led the writers to use the minutest possible characters—the finer the work, provided it could be read, the greater the skill shown in producing it.

In the days of King Asshurbanipal, the Library of Nineveh must have been a model of orderly arrangement. The connection of tablets was indicated by their form; for subjects and narratives were continued on pieces of the same size and shape as those on which they were commenced, the number in a series upon a single subject amounting sometimes to over a hundred. Each series bears a title, which consists of the first few words which it contains. Thus, the series of Astrological tablets, which numbers more than seventy, has as its title, "When the

gods Anu (and) Bêl," for these words form the commencement of the first tablet. We are reminded by this of the Hebrew manner of naming the books of the Pentateuch. *We* call them Genesis, Exodus, etc., but in the Hebrew Bible the first is entitled "In the beginning," the second, "And these are the names," and so on; for with these phrases the books respectively commence.

Each tablet of a series has at its conclusion a statement of the place it occupies in the whole work. Thus, at the end of the first tablet of the series just referred to, we read the words, "First tablet of When the gods Anu (and) Bêl"; at the end of the second, "Second tablet of When the gods Anu (and) Bêl"; and so on. And, to further ensure the maintenance of the correct sequence, we find that in all cases, save the last member of a series, there is at the end of the tablet a catch-phrase which is identical with the first line of the succeeding tablet. A few years ago it was customary with letter-writers to adopt this plan in passing from page to page, and there are a few correspondents who still adhere to it.

The Library of Nineveh resembled our modern libraries in being provided with catalogues of the works contained, and these, like the books themselves, were written upon clay; while little oval tablets with titles on their surface can hardly have been anything but labels for the various series of works. The whole was under the care of custodians or librarians, who, so far as can be judged from the fragments discovered at Koyunjik,

had in charge not fewer than ten thousand inscribed tablets dealing with almost every department of knowledge existing in their age and country.

We may now ask, What was the instrument employed to write these strange books? From the appearance of the writing itself we should be able to form a pretty correct guess. But we are not left to conjecture; for among the ruins have been found little iron rods (or styles), each with a triangular end, and when this was gently applied to the surface of the soft moist clay, a small three-cornered mark was impressed upon it. It was by means of these wedge-shaped marks, arranged in endless variety of grouping, that everything was written. All such writing, whatever the language itself may be, we call *cuneiform* (from the Latin *cuneus*, a wedge).

When one side of a tablet was fully inscribed, the writer proceeded to fill the other side. If it was small, he would continue to hold it carefully in his left hand while he turned it over, and so brought the under side into position to receive the impression of the style which he held in his right hand. But large tablets which could not be grasped between the fingers must have been laid upon a table; and if the side already inscribed were pressed, while still soft, on a hard surface, it is obvious that the writing would be damaged or even effaced.

Here and there among the characters we notice empty spaces showing circular holes such as would

be made by little pegs, like matches, stuck into the soft clay. It is very probable that these holes, which are thought by some to have served the purpose of drains to carry off superfluous moisture, were really made by little pegs that supported the tablet, raising it above the table when it was turned over, and also during the process of baking.

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that all Assyrian inscriptions resemble the books of Asshurbanipal's Library. Many of them are boldly chiselled on large slabs of smoothed stone; and even in the case of those produced by the stylus upon clay, the form of the clay mass is often very different from that of the tablets just described. Thus, historical inscriptions are generally found traced upon the sides of large prisms of terra-cotta, each with six, eight, or even more flat faces. Of this nature are the lengthy records of Tiglath-pileser I. (not the Tiglath-pileser of the Bible, but a much earlier king who reigned in the twelfth century before Christ, and was about contemporary with the prophet Samuel); the annals of Sennacherib, containing the famous narrative of his war against King Hezekiah of Judah; and the historical inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Asshurbanipal. The Babylonian kings, on the other hand, seem to have preferred barrel-shaped masses of clay for their more important public records.

And now, before we enter upon the question of the literature contained in the books of the Nineveh Library, we must glance for a moment at the

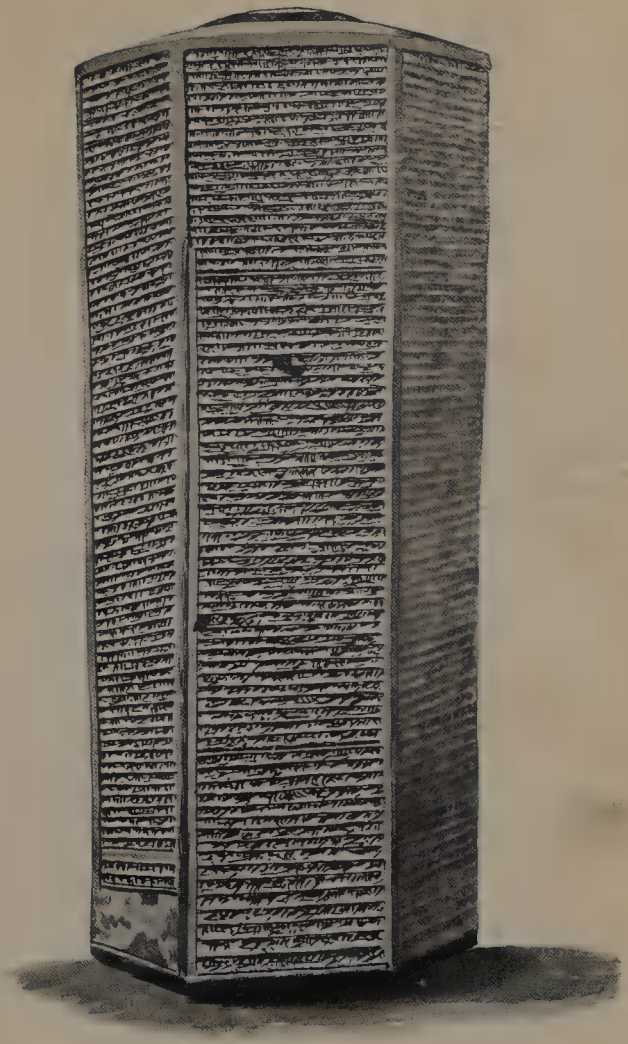

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Fig. 4.—THE TAYLOR CYLINDER, AN HISTORICAL PRISM OF SENNACHERIB. (*British Museum*)

language or languages in which it is written. Speakly broadly, we may call the principal language represented Assyrian—*i.e.* the tongue of the Assyrians; but in order that we may understand who these Assyrians were, and how they came to write in the extraordinary manner they did, it will be necessary to take a brief review of the early history of this part of the world.

Directing our gaze, first of all, to the plains of Chaldæa, or the southern part of the large area drained by the Tigris and Euphrates, and straining our eyes as far back into the hazes of the past as we can possibly penetrate, we find the country occupied by a race of men wholly distinct and different from the Assyrians. This is proved, in addition to much other evidence, by a consideration of the books found in the Royal Library of Asshurbanipal; for these books contain writings in two entirely different languages. The later of the two languages is the Assyrian, and, when read, is found to present a great resemblance to Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic, though in its written system it is entirely different from these. But the older language occurring on the tablets has no affinity with any of the above-named tongues; and all that could be at first ascertained about it was that it had been spoken by a double people, or, more strictly, spoken in two dialects by two branches of the same nation, called the people of Shumer and Akkad; for later kings of Babylon, and also those Assyrian monarchs who conquered

Chaldæa, almost always assumed the title of "kings of Shumer and Akkad."

It is interesting to note that both these names occur in the same verse in Genesis (Gen. x. 10), Akkad with the spelling "Accad," and Shumer in the slightly altered form "Shinar." The difference, however, between the words Shumer and Shinar almost vanishes when we compare the older form of Shumer with the true spelling of Shinar as it appears in the Hebrew Bible.

More than these few facts might, perhaps, have never been learnt about this primeval race and their mysterious language, had it not been for the remarkable discovery, in the Library of Asshurbanipal, of grammars, dictionaries, and even reading-books of this most ancient speech.

For at the time of Asshurbanipal, more than six hundred years before Christ, the language which we call Shumerian, or Shumero-Akkadian, was already a dead language, and had been dead for centuries, forgotten by all but the priests and scholars.

But how history repeats itself! Just as Latin is now a dead language, but is carefully taught in our schools and colleges by means of books, so was it with Shumerian in the days of King Asshurbanipal. And the analogy becomes even more striking when we remember that, just as the services of the Roman Catholic Church have in all ages and countries been conducted in Latin, however little the mass of the people might be able to understand the words unless translated for

them, so in Assyria the knowledge of Shumerian was prevented from perishing mainly because prayers were recited, and religious works written, in this most ancient and most holy tongue.

When we turn to Babylonia, we find that in that country another cause had powerfully contributed to the preservation of a knowledge of the old Shumerian language—viz. the fact that legal matters had always been conducted in it. Law is, in most countries, almost as conservative as theology. Our own legal phraseology abounds in quaint, elsewhere obsolete, expressions. And so was it in Babylonia, where title-deeds continued to be full of Shumerian formulæ long after the ordinary speech had become Semitic. The Shumerian and Akkadian texts found in the Nineveh Library are generally supplied with a translation into modern (!) Assyrian. Sometimes the translation is side by side with the original, sometimes it is interlinear; and it is manifest how invaluable the assistance thus afforded has proved to those who in our own day have laboured at the decipherment of these oldest of records.

Still, in spite of all such help, the difficulties have been prodigious. It is only as the result of almost superhuman patience and industry that we are now enabled to look back upon these primeval inhabitants of Chaldæa, and to form a notion of what manner of men and women they were, and what kind of lives they led.

And, first, from the language of these people we may derive some conclusion as to their race. Now, the language, when examined, turns out to belong neither to that great Indo-European stock to which belong our own tongue and those of almost every nation in Europe, as well as some in Asia; nor again, to that special and well-defined group of languages called Semitic, which embraces the Hebrew, Phœnician, Syriac, Arabic, and Assyrian tongues. On the contrary, it is of that primitive and peculiar type—in part monosyllabic (like Chinese), and in part rudely pieced together—to which the name *agglutinative* (*i.e.* glued or stuck together) has been given, and which is characteristic of the speech of Turks, Tartars, Finns, Hungarians, and many groups of Asiatic nomads. These languages, though showing no very close kinship with each other, are conveniently classed together under the general name *Turanian.*

The language, then, of the Shumero-Akkads, if its relations have been correctly understood, was Turanian, and the people themselves were, in all probability, Turanian too; in other words, they belonged to the great Yellow Race of men, like the Mongols, Turks, and Tartars of to-day.

Whence these Shumero-Akkads sprang in the first instance, it is impossible to state with anything approaching to certainty. We know, indeed, of no earlier race as having occupied Chaldæa, yet it seems highly improbable that

these people were indigenous there. Though lions always abounded in the valley of the Twin Rivers, there was no name for these animals in the written language of the Shumero-Akkads; whilst, on the other hand, they were well supplied with names of metals, though no metallic ores whatever could at any time have been found in the alluvial flats of Chaldæa. Such and other similar indications seem to point to some mountainous and northern home as the starting-place of the ancient race. In the mountainous country lying to the north-east of Chaldæa we know that there dwelt in the old time races having some kinship with the Shumero-Akkads, and perhaps we are right in conjecturing not only that the latter poured into Chaldæa, at an immeasurably remote period, from this direction, but that their real origin, or first point of departure, is to be sought far, far back in the mountains of Central Asia, in the neighbourhood of the Altaï chain.

Such a view would derive strong confirmation from the fact, if only it could be proved to be a fact, that there is an intimate connection and community of origin between the oldest signs in the written language of China and the earliest forms of those used by the Shumerians. But this point must be considered as still unsettled, the arguments, though strong, being as yet scarcely conclusive. Nor must we forget the attempts that have been made, not without success, by Simcox in his "Primitive Civilisations" to trace a vital resemblance between the types of culture, and in

particular the legal conceptions, of the Shumerians and the Chinese.

But, however all this may be, we must be careful not to think of the Shumero-Akkads as anything like a race of savages. They seem, on the contrary, to have brought into Chaldæa the first rudiments of civilisation, and to have carried it there to a very high point. They were probably the first to perceive that the alluvial plains, exposed to alternate inundations and destructive droughts, would, in spite of the great fertility of the soil, never be able to support a large population without a system of irrigation on a vast and comprehensive scale, and they therefore became pioneers in the construction of those wonderful canals that for thousands of years rendered the land constantly productive and prosperous. When the old empires finally broke up, the canals fell into neglect and ruin, and the prosperity of this part of the world vanished like a dream. We may apply to these canals the words of Byron, and say,

"Their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts."

The Shumero-Akkads also introduced into Chaldæa the art of working metals, and were the first to turn to account that important material for construction which the land so copiously supplies —viz. clay. In all this vast alluvial country there is no building stone whatever, indeed scarcely a pebble on the surface of the soil. But clay to

an unlimited extent is there, and by burning this, or even simply drying it in the sun, a substantial building material can be made. It is of the dwellers in this very land of Shinar, or Shumer, that we read in Genesis xi. 3, "they had brick for stone."

But there was one more invaluable service rendered to civilisation by this same ancient people—they invented an art of writing. What kind of system it was, and in what way it determined the writing of subsequent and quite different races, we shall see by-and-bye.

The life of these Turanian inhabitants of Chaldæa, who must have been established there at least six or seven thousand years before Christ, seems to have been on the whole peaceful and happy. They had strong home affections, and a civilisation of a simple, domestic type.

Their legal system, to which they attached much importance, and which they bequeathed in great part to succeeding races, was based on the fundamental principles of family law. Commerce flourished, and all kinds of business transactions, embodied in orderly legal documents, characterised their daily intercourse. Naturally, the cultivation of the soil was the main occupation; but the people also dwelt to a large extent in cities—though probably of a very rural character—over which kindly tutelary divinities presided.

The southern half of the land was inhabited

by the Shumerians; the northern, by their close kinsfolk, the Akkadians. The southern part was the more anciently occupied and civilised; and the earliest name by which we find it designated was Kengi, which Dr Hilprecht considers to mean—and no description of the country could be more accurate—"the land of canals and reeds." It was in this southern part, too, that the primitive population longest retained its typical characteristics, whilst the northern region, Akkad, was yielding to new and foreign influences.

And now a few words about the religion of the people. Making use of the extensive collection of Shumero-Akkadian prayers, incantations, and other sacred texts found in the Nineveh Library, and powerfully assisted by the translations into Assyrian with which they are accompanied, scholars (notably Sir Henry Rawlinson, George Smith, and François Lenormant) have been enabled to reconstruct, and place before us with considerable accuracy of detail, the religious beliefs of these ancient inhabitants of Chaldæa. It is, of course, impossible to determine how many different phases or periods of religious thought these texts reveal, to what extent the varying conceptions were simultaneous, or, if successive, in what precise order they were evolved. And long before the date to which even the earliest of these records takes us back, there must have been vast periods of time during which the first rudimentary ideas were shaping

themselves into the thoughts and beliefs that we find expressed.

A primitive and simple animism—the natural childlike conception that every power, almost every active object, in nature is animated by a separate spirit or indwelling personality — may have been the earliest stage of all. Then, as time went on, this would be pretty certainly followed by a belief in magic arts, known to specially endowed individuals in the community, by which these active powers of weal and woe could be bent to compliance with human wishes —a stage where the "medicine-man," or sorcerer, plays an important part, and which is designated by the name Shamanism.

But crude and primitive as were the religious beliefs and cosmical conceptions of the Shumero-Akkads at the time when we first know them, they had advanced in some respects beyond these earliest notions even at the period from which their oldest written records date. They had learned to group and generalise to a considerable extent, as a brief survey of their thoughts, gathered from Asshurbanipal's tablets, will show. Let us glance, then, at a few of these old-world dreamings, interesting, surely, if for no other reason, because the very earliest of which we have any account in the whole history of man.

The earth, in the view of these ancient people, was, of course, not a globular planet revolving round the sun, but the principal part of the universe, fixed and immovable. They did not,

however, regard it as flat, but convex, like an inverted bowl. Above it stretched the vault of the sky, a solid dome, bearing the fixed stars. The planets, distinguished by their wandering movements, were thought of, or at least poetically represented as, sheep that strayed from the flock, independent-spirited animals that grazed in the heavenly pastures where they would. All round the solid earth rolled the ocean, a vast encircling mass of water that, like the Okeanos of ancient Greek cosmology, shut in the land on every side, and even passed beneath the whole of it in a mighty subterranean cavity. The universe was thronged in every part with spirits in different ranks and orders. There were divinities of the sky, air, earth, and water; of the sun, moon, planets, and stars; spirits, some good, some evil; and all concerned in producing the varied phenomena of nature and human life. From the oldest incantations we learn that all these spiritual forces, except perhaps the demoniacal, or essentially evil ones, were under the control of two great ruling powers, or, possibly, were summed up into two great comprehensive groups, invoked respectively as the Spirit of Heaven and the Spirit of Earth. It may be that the oldest recorded sentence in the world is the oft-recurring formula (no doubt long handed down orally before it was ever written), which usually ends the incantations, "O Spirit of Heaven, conjure; O Spirit of Earth, conjure!"

Death was not believed to end human existence,

but the prospects of men and women in the future state were far from cheering. A little more about this will be said at the end of the chapter. For the present it will be enough to state that down in the depths of the earth was a doleful region, called by various awe-inspiring names, to which the spirits of the departed, whether good or evil, were all alike condemned. This gloomy country was spoken of as the "Great Land," the "Great City," the "Dark Dwelling," the "Land of no Return," and was ruled over by an inexorable divinity called the "Lady of the Great Land."

Human life is exposed, alas! to so much suffering and misfortune, that in an utterly unscientific age, when no notion existed of the prevalence of immutable natural laws, the part which evil spirits were supposed to play in bringing about miseries and disasters could not fail to be a prominent one. Many of the spiritual powers were thought of by the Shumero-Akkads as in themselves cruel, as demons who (in the expressive language of the texts) "knew not compassion," and "heard not prayer and supplication." Hence arose, inevitably, a vast and complicated system of conjuring and magic arts, for since there were no means of conciliating these implacable beings, the only thing left was to compel them. Thus magic rites, partly spoken, partly acted, and all kinds of incantations and spells were resorted to; and the great collection of texts that have come down to us from these early times contains formulæ for conjuring and driving away to lonely places all the different

kinds of demons, whether the authors of pestilence, famine, and insanity, or even of dreams and nightmares.

As with the Hebrews, so with the ancient dwellers in Chaldæa, the number seven was sacred. Doubtless this idea originated in the number of the planets (*i.e.* the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, which were the only ones known to them); and these radiant beings found their counterpart in a special group of seven evil spirits, or demons, to whom the texts attribute the most maleficent qualities. Here, for instance, is a short description of them. The text is bi-lingual—*i.e.* in Shumerian with an interlinear Assyrian translation. On the original tablet the second line, for example, appears thus:

Shumerian—

idim zu - ab - ta imin - na mesh

Assyrian—

ina na - kab ap - si - i si - bit - ti shu-nu

It will be noticed that, though the individual characters differ, the signs are quite similar in the two lines (the Shumerian and the Assyrian).

It is only when we come to read them, and see what they spell out, that we perceive them to be in two entirely different languages. The explanation of this will be given more fully a little later on.

Now for the meaning of the whole piece, in English :—

"Seven are they! Seven are they!
In the hollow of the abysmal deep seven are they!
Flashing gleams in the sky are they.
In the hollow of the abysmal deep, in the under-ocean have they grown up.
Male they are not, female they are not,
A storm of dust, travellers are they.
Wife they possess not, unto them no child is born.
Compassion and beneficence they know not.
Prayer and supplication they hear not.
Horses they are that have grown up in the mountain.
Foes are they of Ea.
Leaders under the gods are they.
To cause trouble in the canal they set themselves in the street.
Fiends, fiends are they!
Seven are they, seven are they, seven twice said are they!
O Spirit of Heaven, conjure! O Spirit of Earth, conjure!"

But besides this particular group of demons, who, in addition to their other misdeeds, once engaged in a terrific conspiracy to darken and overthrow the moon, we find a vast number of others whose attacks are the cause of all manner of mischief and distress. There is the plague-demon and the fiend whose onslaught produces insanity, or some other dire disease of the head. There are evil spirits that roar, that whisper, that pass from house to house; "no door restrains them, no bolt turns them back." "Like snakes they glide through the door, like wind they blow through the socket." "They flash like stars in the sky, they

pass like rain in the night." They tear "the bride from her husband's bosom, they snatch the child from its parent's knee."

And in addition to all these invisible agents of evil, there were practisers of the art of black magic, sorcerers, who, by the control they had obtained over demons, could bring disease, misfortune, and death upon their fellow-creatures. Well might the poor Shumerian, amid these countless possibilities of woe, seek some powerful means of coping with his seen and unseen foes. Nor was he without helps and remedies, which, if they did not always remove his troubles, at least gave him hope and courage to confront them. He could utter all kinds of incantations and perform all manner of magic rites himself, or with the aid of his priest or friendly sorcerer. And he could appeal to divine beings conceived of as essentially merciful and kind.

It has been already stated that a prayer addressed to the Spirit of Heaven and the Spirit of Earth forms the usual conclusion of the earliest incantations. The basis of this must have been a belief in the fundamental goodness and benevolence of the more powerful spiritual forces of the universe. The same thought is illustrated by the appeals which we find uttered, possibly in somewhat later compositions, to many other divinities of sky, earth, and sea. But of all these kindly gods and goddesses, there seems to have been none in whom so much confidence was placed, at least

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Fig. 5.—DEMON OF THE SOUTH-WEST WIND.

in certain parts of the country, as in Ea, the mighty god of the Ocean. This powerful divinity, whose usual home was in the deep, was supposed not only to possess boundless knowledge and wisdom, but to be animated by a constant friendliness to mankind. He knew all the machinations of the evil spirits; he knew, also, by what secret spells they could be frustrated.

But Ea was a divine personage of state so high that to trouble him with petitions might well be deemed presumptuous on the part of man. Could not a mediator be employed? So appeals were addressed to his benevolently active son Asari-uru-duga, who conveyed to his father the prayer of the petitioner, and, having obtained knowledge of the remedy, imparted the precious secret to the priest.

The following is a specimen of the incantations in which such ideas were embodied :—

"The Disease of the Head has come forth from the earth,
From the dwelling of the god Mul-lil he has come forth!"

Then we have a long, detailed, and somewhat obscure description of the sufferer's symptoms; and by-and-bye we read :

"Asari-uru-duga looks upon him,
To his father Ea, into the house, he enters, and says to him,
'My father, the Disease of the Head has come forth from the earth.'
For the second time he has addressed him :
'What he must do, this man knows not, nor how he may be at rest.'

Ea answers his son Asari-uru-duga,
'My son, what dost thou not know? What can I add to thy knowledge?
What I know, thou also knowest.
But go, my son Asari-uru-duga,
Take [probably some vessel].
Draw water from the mouth of the Twin Rivers.
Lay upon these waters thy holy spell,
Purify them with thy pure charm.
Sprinkle with them the man, son of his god.
Bind the . . . upon his head.
. . . . . .
Place him on the broad highway.'
May the madness of his head be dispelled!
May the disease of his head, which has rushed down like a night rain, be driven away!
May the word of Ea beam forth!
May Damkina [the wife of Ea] give direction!
May Asari-uru-duga, the first-born son of the deep, be unto thee brightness and blessing!"

It is not improbable that in such incantations as the preceding we may see an original reference to natural processes and phenomena. Asari-uru-duga is identical with Marduk, who is a solar divinity, and, in particular, god of the early morning and of the spring of the year. His sonship to Ea, the god of the watery realm, perhaps means that the sun at dawn emerges from the breast of ocean, and in the spring-time rises higher and higher above its surface. Hence the beneficent magic power which the texts attribute to Ea's son, Asari-uru-duga, may simply refer, in the first instance at all events, to that mysterious, vivifying, and health-giving influence which is exerted by

the sun's rays in the early morning and the spring.

Magic words were often accompanied, among the Shumero-Akkads, by magic rites, or at least by symbolic acts which were supposed to assist the working of the charm. In one of the texts, which is a good specimen of this kind of incantation, we are to suppose a man to be suffering from the consequences of a spell or ban that has been laid upon him. An onion or garlic is first taken, stripped of its skins, and thrown into the fire, and the following words are uttered :—

"Like this garlic which is peeled and cast into the fire ;—
The burning fire shall consume it,
In the garden it shall not be planted,
In pool or canal it shall not be set,
Its root shall not seize the earth,
Its stem shall not grow, nor see the sun,
For the food of god or king it shall not be offered ;—
So may the raising of the curse . . .,
The wearing disease, the error, the sin, the wickedness, the transgression,
The disease which is in my body, my flesh, and my muscles,
Like this garlic may it be peeled off,
And on this day may the burning fire consume it !
May the ban depart, that I may see the light !"

Next a date is plucked from the bunch and thrown into the fire, with the words :

"Like this date which is cut and cast into the fire ;—
The burning fire shall consume it,
To its cluster the plucker shall not restore it,
For the dish of god or king it shall not be offered ;—
So, etc., etc."

Then a branch of a tree is torn away, and burned with similar words; then some wool, some goat's hair, and finally some dyed thread. At each successive act the incantation is repeated, and the prayer for deliverance uttered afresh.

One curious way of dealing with evil spirits consisted in making the most hideous possible images of them. It was the opinion of Lenormant that the object of doing this was to actually terrify them away by the sight of their own likenesses. If such a view is correct (and it is to some extent supported by what we find in the texts), the small bronze statue figured on the opposite page, and of which the original may be seen at the Louvre, was probably an example of this method of procedure. It certainly cannot be called a flattering portrait. An inscription on the back tells us that it was intended to represent the Demon of the South-West or Desert Wind, and was to be placed at the door or window.

Another kindred subject of art is to be seen at the British Museum. It seems to have been a favourite with sculptors in bas-relief, for we find it several times repeated. It shows us a couple of demons fighting, with faces like those of a pair of infuriated cats. Probably the underlying idea is a desire that the evil spirits represented may turn their attack against each other, and thus have no strength left wherewith to assail mankind.

Talismans of many kinds were highly esteemed by the Shumero-Akkads, such as strips of fabric

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Fig. 6.—DEMONS FIGHTING. (*From a Bas-Relief at the British Museum*)

inscribed with magic sentences, at times attached to the body or clothing, and at times fastened to articles of furniture. But the greater durability of baked clay and hard stone caused these materials to be still more often employed for the purpose. Under the thresholds of Assyrian palaces have been found small clay statues of gods, doubtless placed there to exert a protective influence against the attack of hostile spirits. And those great

Fig. 7.—ASSYRIAN WINGED BULL

winged bulls with human heads, the colossi that astonish us to-day in the Assyrian rooms of the British Museum, were placed at the gates of royal palaces by kings who reigned thousands of years later than the times we are at present considering, in order that they might keep watch and ward against foes, whether visible or invisible. They may be considered as nothing but late representations of the guardian spirits believed in by the old

Shumero-Akkads, and essentially identical with the Biblical Cherubim. It is, moreover, stated, but perhaps on doubtful authority, that the colossal bulls of Assyria sometimes went in that country by the name Kirubu, which presents a striking resemblance to the Hebrew word Cherub. And, in any case, it is not improbable that the latter word was akin to the Assyrian *karâbu*, "to bless," or *karûbu*, "mighty," which would be an appropriate adjective for the colossi in question.

Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib (as we learn from 2 Kings xix. 37), and father of Asshurbanipal, after giving an account of the building of his palace, adds, in the inscription:

"I placed, right and left of the entrance, stone bulls and colossi, who, in accordance with their fixed command (or, perhaps, their position), turn back the breast of the foe, protecting the footsteps and blessing the path of the king, their maker."

And in another place he writes:

"In the interior of that palace (I placed) a propitious bull, a propitious colossus, who protect my royal footsteps and rejoice my liver."

We must not be greatly surprised that the Assyrians, like other ancient peoples, localised their feelings rather curiously; and all the less should we wonder when we recollect that to this day the "bile" and the "spleen" are often identified with mental states, and that we habitually speak of the "heart" as the seat of the emotions. Old English writers, moreover, sometimes describe

cowardly persons as "white-livered" and "lily-livered."

How long the Turanian population carried on its simple existence in the plains of Chaldæa, practising the rudimentary religion and maintaining the primitive institutions of its ancestors, undisturbed by foreign influences, we have no means of determining. But at last a change, quite boundless in its consequences, began to take place in the land.

In the later texts of this still early age a higher and more spiritual feeling is discernible than can be traced in any of the oldest compositions.

Conscience is evidently awakening, an ethical element manifests itself in religious thought, and there is a yearning of the soul after forgiveness of sin.

By some of the utterances of this period we are strikingly reminded of the most pathetic prayers of the Hebrew Psalter, and they have been appropriately named the Penitential Psalms. The following are a few extracts from one such Psalm, not without real poetic beauty and spiritual depth :—

"O my god, whom I know and whom I know not, my sins are many, great are my transgressions !
O my goddess, whom I know and whom I know not, my sins are many, great are my transgressions !
The sin that I sinned I knew not.
The transgression wherein I transgressed I knew not.
. . . . . .

The lord in the wrath of his heart has looked upon me.
The god in the fierceness of his heart has revealed himself to me.
The goddess has been violent against me, and put me to grief.

. . . . . .

I seek for help, and none takes my hand.
I weep, and none draws near to my side.
I cry aloud, and there is none that hears me.
I am in trouble and hiding, I look not up.
To my god, the merciful one, I turn, I utter my prayer;
The feet of my goddess I kiss, and water with tears.

. . . . . .

O lord, destroy not thy servant!
When cast into the waters, take thou his hand.
The sins that I have sinned turn thou to blessing.
The transgressions I have committed, let the wind sweep them away!"

The change which we see coming over the religious spirit of the primitive population was due not so much to internal evolution as to the influence of another race of men which had begun to pour into the country. The memory of this immigration was preserved, and at the same time confused, by marvellous legends; but the truth undoubtedly was this, that, at a period impossible to define, but probably much more than four thousand years before Christ, men of Semitic race (and therefore akin to the Hebrews, Phœnicians, and Arabs) began to make their presence felt in Chaldæa. There are many indications that they came from the north. It is certain that Akkad, the northern portion of the alluvial country, was the first to feel the

effects of the invasion, and to yield to the new influences.

Now, it is noticeable that in the case of the Penitential Psalms which we have been considering, the original language is always Akkadian, not Shumerian; and Professor Sayce is probably quite right in seeing also in the general tone and religious standpoint of these compositions strong evidences of Semitic thought. At the same time some of the ideas expressed are so strictly in accordance with the religious notions of the Shumero-Akkads that we are bound to consider the Penitential Psalms as a resultant product of the combined feeling of the two races.

The Semites were a people of marked racial characteristics. They had long lived, probably as pastoral nomads, in close contact with nature; delighted in the contemplation of the sun, the moon, and the starry heavens; and in religious thought had reached a level that rose in many important respects far above that of the Turanian folk into whose midst they came.

We know little of the process by which the new-comers blended with the older inhabitants of the land. No doubt there was much bloodshed and strife in the early stages. Dr Hilprecht, the learned Assyriologist of the Babylonian Expedition sent out by the University of Pennsylvania, believes that among the recently discovered records from the ancient Chaldæan

city of Nippur, documents have come to light which give some contemporary account of the struggles between the established and the invading races. Other scholars, indeed, dissent from his opinions on this point; but if he is right, we not only perceive that the conquest of Chaldæa by the Semites was far from rapid, and that the tide of victory flowed first to one side and then to the other with no steady set in either direction—facts which all admit—but we seem permitted to watch some of the most striking vicissitudes which marked the course of the struggle. Into these matters we need not enter now. By one means or another the result was at length accomplished. The Semites became the dominant power in the land. The new-comers blended with the older race, till, by constant intermarriage, both at last came to form one nation.

The process of amalgamation, slow as it doubtless was, and attended in its earlier phases with much resistance, friction, and strife, was in the end as complete a fusion as that of Saxon and Norman in our own country.

The ancient Turanian religion, though it never passed away, yielded greatly to Semitic influences, and became thereby modified and elevated; while the language of the Semites gradually superseded the old speech of Shumer and Akkad. And thus was formed that wonderful compound race which we call in later days, from the name of the city which rose to the leading position in the land, the Babylonian nation.

Such was its vitality, and so indestructible its qualities, that, in spite of revolutions, conquests, and its subjection even for centuries at a time to the rule of foreign dynasties, it remained substantially unchanged, working out its own destiny and living its own national life, for nearly three thousand years.

But now another most important set of events claims our attention for a moment. As yet nothing has been said about the population of the northern, or upland division of Mesopotamia, that large portion of the region watered by the Twin Rivers which we call Assyria. It is generally held that at a very early period emigrants from Chaldæa pressed northwards into this upper tract, and thus gave origin to the Assyrian nation.

Such a view may possibly be thought to find confirmation in the eleventh verse of the tenth chapter of Genesis, whether we translate it "Out of that land (Shinar) he (*i.e.* Nimrod) went forth into Assyria, and builded Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah," or "Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, etc." And, although there can be no question that the Assyrian nation was at all times far more purely Semitic than the people of Babylonia, a fact which renders it difficult to believe that the bulk of the Assyrian population had its origin in the mixed race that inhabited the plains of Chaldæa, yet it is equally certain that the religion, culture, and

civilisation generally of the northern kingdom were as distinctly derived from those of Babylonia as the intellectual heritage of the United States and Australia is traceable to Britain. But it is likely that the verse in Genesis refers to events far later than the first founding of the Assyrian nation, and the probability of the case would seem to be this: that people of Semitic race had inhabited the upper valley of the Tigris and Euphrates from an immeasurably early date, and that the culture of Babylonia pushed its way and established itself among them without greatly affecting their racial characteristics. At what precise period this process commenced we do not know, but that it was in an extremely remote age is evident from the fact that we have inscriptions written in Semitic, and in the Babylonian style, by kings of Guti and Lulubi, who reigned among the northern hills nearly four thousand years before Christ.

As for Assyria itself, we find it mentioned by name (as Mr King points out in his "Letters of Hammurabi") in a letter addressed by a king of Babylonia to his vassal at the close of the third millennium B.C. Yet our knowledge of the country, save for the most fragmentary notices, does not begin till a far later date. We are acquainted with the names of priest-kings who ruled at the city of Asshur eighteen hundred years before Christ, and we obtain occasional glimpses of the national life of Assyria during the seven following centuries till the commencement of more continuous historic records. During

all this early period the formidable race, firmly established in the whole land between the upper Tigris and the mountains, was gathering strength and independence, and preparing itself for the unique part which it was to play in the history of the East. Then, in the fulness of time, Assyria burst forth from its boundaries with a vigour and martial ardour before which almost every nation of Western Asia was to tremble, and even the pride of Egypt to bite the dust.

How forcibly do the Hebrew prophets again and again portray these irresistible warriors! Thus in Isaiah v. 26-29, we read:—"They shall come with speed swiftly: none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver."

Although in this prophecy the Assyrians are not expressly named, all the circumstances of the time at which it was uttered seem to point clearly to them. And at last, when the mighty colossus of the north had been hurled down in hopeless ruin, in what picturesque and powerful language does Ezechiel (xxxi. 2-15), a prophet of the Captivity, pronounce the dirge of the fallen great!

He is addressing the king of Egypt, and he says: "Whom art thou like in thy greatness? Behold Asshur was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs (or, perhaps, the clouds). The waters nourished him, the deep made him to grow. . . . All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the plane trees were not as his branches; nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him in his beauty. I made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

"Therefore thus said the Lord God: . . . I have driven him out for his wickedness. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. . . . Thus saith the Lord God: In the day when he went down to Sheol [the world of the departed] I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the rivers thereof, and the great

waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him."

It would be quite outside the scope of the present chapter to enter upon even the briefest sketch of the history of either Babylonia or Assyria. But the few hurried strokes with which an attempt has been made to indicate the origin of the Assyrian nation, and the source whence its civilisation was derived, will serve to throw some light upon the nature of the books in the Royal Library of Nineveh, and will at least suffice to make clear the two following points:—

(1) That the Assyrians, being a Semitic people, *spoke*, and in most of their books and inscriptions *wrote*, a Semitic language akin to Hebrew, Phœnician, Syriac, and the Arabic still widely used to-day. This language we call Assyrian. (2) That their *art of writing* was not of their own invention, but borrowed from the Shumero-Akkads who were its originators. As used by the Assyrians, therefore, the written system was a method that had been invented for one language, and was then employed for a totally different one.

And now we may ask, What was the character of this art of writing which the people of Shumer and Akkad had devised, and which the Assyrians, as well as several other ancient peoples of the East, inherited from them? We are ourselves so accustomed to written systems in which all

the words of a language can be spelled out, by means of a few simple signs, called letters, that it is, perhaps, natural to expect that the Shumerian method will, on examination, turn out to be of this character too. But nothing could be further from the truth. When men in various parts, and at various ages, of the world first thought of writing, whether Egyptians, Chinese, North American Indians, Mexicans, or Shumerians, they never dreamed of anything like an alphabet, or, indeed, of anything in the nature of phonetic writing at all. Their notion was to *copy the objects* which they saw, and of which they might desire to make mention. In other words, the first writing has always been *picture-drawing*.

To all such systems we give the name *hieroglyphic*, and they stand out in marked contrast to all *phonetic* systems, or writing by sound. A simple illustration will make this clear. Suppose it were desired to make mention, in writing, of *the sun*. In a hieroglyphic system we should draw a circle, or a figure as much like one as we conveniently could, and let that stand for the sun. And in this there is no reference whatever to a spoken word. The *object itself* is all we think of, and we should draw the same figure for the sun, by whatever name we called it.

But in a phonetic system, such as our own, we proceed to analyse the sounds of the *word* "*sun*"; and we put down—

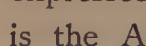
(1) A sign to represent a hissing noise made with the tongue and teeth—*s*.

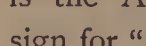
(2) A sign to represent a vowel sound produced in the larynx—*u*.

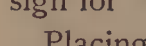
(3) A sign to represent a nasal sound, in the production of which the tongue and palate co-operate—*n*; and, writing all these in succession, we spell out the word s-u-n.

But, although phonetic writing is almost universal in the modern world, with the exception of China, there still remain traces of the hieroglyphic method even in the Europe of to-day; as, for instance, when we write 1, to mean *one*. And we occasionally combine the two principles, as when we write Charing +.

The first Shumerian writing, then, was a system of picture-drawing or of hieroglyphs. It is difficult to know whether the pictures were ever accurate copies of the objects they purported to represent. For at an incalculably remote epoch they underwent so much alteration and conventionalisation, that, in the earliest form in which they are known to us, the signs (unlike the Egyptian hieroglyphs) rarely present any decided likeness to particular objects. The few, however, which do preserve such resemblance suffice to demonstrate the principle adopted in their invention; and it is interesting to note that the Babylonians and Assyrians retained a tradition of the true origin of their signs, as is proved by a tablet found at Koyunjik, on which are given a number of characters, and, by their side, the drawings of objects out of which they sprang. The hieroglyphic principle is, moreover, clearly shown by

the method in which certain complex ideas are expressed in the signs. For instance,  is the Assyrian sign for "a mouth,"  is the sign for "water."

Placing the second inside the first, we obtain  , which is the sign for "to drink."

Similarly with  , the sign for "food." Putting this within the sign for "mouth," we obtain  , the sign for "to eat."

The sign  stands for "death." When this is placed within the sign for "mouth," we have  , which is the sign for "poison."

In like manner,  is the Babylonian sign for the "sun" or a "day."

If we place  , which stands for "thirty" (three tens), within it, the result is  , which is the Babylonian sign for "month."

The characters invented by the Shumerians underwent many changes in the long lapse of ages during which they were employed. When we remember how different the handwriting in our own country was at the time of Chaucer, only five hundred years ago, from what it is to-day, we need not be surprised that in the four thousand years of Chaldæan history, great alterations should have developed in the script.

The few signs which follow will serve to illustrate these changes.

Line 1 gives them in their most archaic form, which is linear, with no appearance of wedge-shaped marks. They are from an inscription of more than four thousand years B.C.

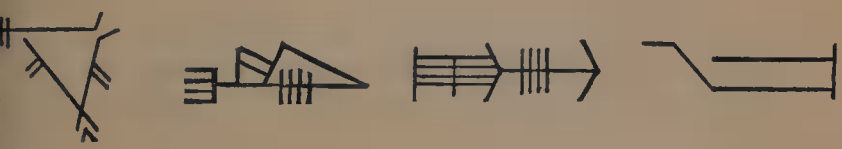
Line 2 gives the same signs in old Hieratic Babylonian, a monumental form which was retained through a very long period.

Line 3 gives them in Neo-Babylonian, of the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

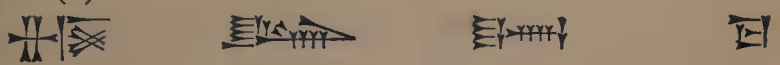
Line 4 gives them in Neo-Assyrian, of the time of Asshurbanipal.

The words are Shumerian, and read "nam lugal kalama," "the sovereignty of the world."

(1)



(2)



(3)

(4)

We have seen that the signs when first invented were drawings of objects. Of course no corruption

and alteration of their form, and no symbolic use of them to express abstract ideas, could change their essential character as hieroglyphs.

It is manifest that, even if the drawings were very carefully executed, great ambiguity would arise in their interpretation, and this would be none the less the case when the signs were conventionalised into forms bearing no particular resemblance to anything. To obviate this difficulty, at least in part, a system of "*determinatives*" was adopted—*i.e.* certain signs were prefixed to others in order to determine the class of thing meant.

For instance, before the signs for objects made of wood or stone, the sign for "wood" or "stone," respectively, was placed; before the signs for countries the general sign for "country" was used; before the names of women, the sign for "woman"; and so on. Yet, in spite of all such aids, the deficiencies of this mode of writing made themselves so seriously felt that at a very early period indeed the Shumerians struck out a wholly new principle—*i.e.* they began to give a *phonetic power* to their signs.

A large number of signs came thus to represent spoken sounds, and by their means words could be, as it were, spelled out. Such phonetics were, however, but charily used by the Shumerians, being mainly employed to act as what we call "*phonetic complements*"—*i.e.* they were appended to the hieroglyphs, or signs for whole words, in order to show in what sounds those words were to end and thus to aid in their decipherment.

It was as though, when we want to write the word "foot," we were to draw a foot, and then write a *t* after it; whereas, when we wish to write "walk," we were to make the same drawing, and write a *k* after it.

But though words could be, so to speak, spelled out by the Shumerians, if they chose to make use of their signs as phonetics, yet we must not for a moment suppose that they had an alphabet. What they possessed was rather a *syllabary* than an alphabet, there being a sign, not for each letter, but for each *syllable*, of the spoken language. Now, the least reflection will show us that whereas twenty or thirty letters, variously combined, will suffice to represent all the words of a language, it will require a far greater number of syllable-signs to accomplish this result. Still, the departure from a purely hieroglyphic system to one even partially phonetic was a vast improvement on mere picture-drawing, and for this advance we must give the Shumerians full credit.

We now come to the Semites. When these immigrants first entered Chaldæa, and commenced to establish themselves in the land, they found that, ancient as was the date of their arrival, the Shumero-Akkads had long been dwelling there in possession of a settled and literary civilisation. The invading Semite, on the other hand, had no written system of his own, nor did he take the trouble to invent one; but finding an art of writing already practised by the cultured people of the land, he proceeded to appropriate it ready-made,

and to adapt it, as well as he could, to his own entirely different language.

In this he showed little originality, for he not only adopted without alteration the hundreds of complicated signs used by the Shumerians, but he retained both their hieroglyphic and their phonetic values. It is obvious that this twofold character, or method of usage, of the signs adds a further and most serious complication to the system of writing and, consequently, much increases the difficulty of deciphering Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions.

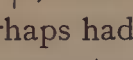
Let us see how it operates.

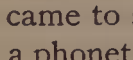
Take, for example, the Assyrian sign  . This is a simplification or corruption of an original drawing of the sun, and appears in old Babylonian as  (see page 56). The Shumerian name for the sun was *ut* or *utu*; so the sign in question, when used in Shumerian as a hieroglyph (or, as we generally call it, an *ideogram*), was read *ut*, and when used as a phonetic had also the value *ut*. But what happened when the Semite got hold of this sign? He likewise pronounced it, as a phonetic, *ut*, using it whenever he required that syllable in writing one of his words. But he did not forget that the sign had also the ideographic (or hieroglyphic) value "the sun"; and the Semitic name of the sun was not *ut*, but *shamshu*.

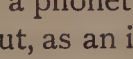
Hence the sign was read *shamshu* by the Assyrians and Babylonians whenever they meant

by it "the sun," as they often did in their inscriptions.

So, again, with the sign  , which in Shumerian was pronounced *an*, and perhaps had originally the meaning "high," whence it came to stand for "the sky," and also "a god." As a phonetic, the Semites read it as the syllable *an*; but, as an ideogram, they pronounced it *shamû*, the Semitic word for "the sky," and also *ilu*, their word for "a god."

Thus, if in Assyrian we write  , we read *an-nu* (="this").

But if we write  , *i.e.* an-e, we read *shamê* (="the sky").

And if we write  , *i.e.* an + the plural sign, we read *ilâni* ("the gods").

To make this point very clear, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the French had (like the Shumerians) invented an art of writing, half hieroglyphic, half phonetic. And then imagine that the English did not know how to write, but, after coming into contact with the French, borrowed from them their written system. Next, suppose that there existed in this French system a hieroglyph for "a hole." This sign would, of course, be read *trou*; and when required as a phonetic would possess the value *trou*, being available for writing down such words as *trou*ver, *trou*peau, *Trou*ville. But how would the English deal with it? By them, too, it would, as a

phonetic be used to express the syllable *trou* (*tru*, *troo*), and be employed in the writing of such words as *tru*ly, *troo*per, in*tru*sion. But, as an ideogram, it would mean "a hole," and would therefore be read "*hole*"; a word which has no more resemblance in sound to *trou* than *shamshu* has to *ut*, or *shamû* and *ilu* to *an*.

In Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions there is nothing whatever, save the context, to indicate whether a sign is to be read as an ideogram or a phonetic. This is bad enough; but, to make it worse, each sign has not just one ideographic and one phonetic value, but frequently a good many of each, and there is nothing to show which, of all these, is to be selected and read. Take, for instance, the sign  .

If we write the word  , we read *dan*-nu.

If we write the word  , we read ki-*rib*.

If we write the word  , we read u-*kal*-lim.

If we write the word  , we read *Lab*-na-na.

So, again, with the sign  . We have already seen that this may be read *shamshu*, "the sun." But the same sign has sometimes to be read *ûmu*, "a day," sometimes *pitsû*, "white," and sometimes *atsû*, "to go forth," "to rise"; whilst its phonetic powers are also numerous, and include the values *ut*, *tu*, *par*, *tam*, *khis*, and *lakh*.

Thus the reading of Assyrian and Babylonian

inscriptions is beset with difficulties, and requires much study, care, and practice.

In illustration of the principles of cuneiform writing as just sketched, it may be interesting to see how King Sennacherib wrote his own name.

The name Sennacherib is a slightly altered form of the true Assyrian Sin-akhê-irbâ, which consists of the three elements :—

(1) Sin = "The Moon-god."

(2) akhê = "brethren,"

(3) irbâ = "he increases." So the whole name means "The Moon-god increases brethren."

In Assyrian it is written

in which we may observe the following parts :—

(1)  , the determinative for "man," to indicate that what follows is a man's name.

(2)  , the determinative for a "divinity," because we are about to name the Moon-god.

(3)  , the ideogram for the Moon-god. Literally this sign = "thirty," and the Moon-god was called "the god thirty," because there are (about) thirty days in a lunar month.

(4)  , the ideogram for *akhu*, "a brother."

(5)  , the sign of the plural, converting *akhu*, "brother," into *akhê*, "brethren."

(6)  , the sign *su*, which in Shumerian

means "to increase." But the Assyrian word for "to increase" is *rabû*, which makes *irbâ* in the 3rd person singular. So in the present case we read the sign *su* as *irbâ*.

In place of the last sign, we sometimes find the name Sennacherib ending with the two signs  . These, as phonetics, are read as the syllables *er* and *ba* respectively; so, when placed in succession, they spell the word *er-ba* (*irbâ*.) This shows us an alternative method of writing the last part of the name, and also proves our reading of the sign *su* as *irbâ* to be correct.

Having now formed some idea as to the manner in which the books of Asshurbanipal's strange Library were written, we may take a hurried survey of the literature itself which they contain. The whole collection may be divided into two parts: (1) the Documentary Department, and (2) the Reference Library.

In the first of these we find a large number of deeds on clay, or contract-tablets, embodying all kinds of agreements between individuals, and generally of a commercial nature. Many of them relate to the sale and transfer of land, houses, and slaves; some, to leases; some, to loans of money, on mortgage or otherwise, with the rate of interest stated. They all bear dates, and show the names of the witnesses, as well as the seals of the contracting parties; and, in cases where the latter were unable to produce a seal, we often find a thumb-mark instead, with

the words; "thumb-mark of so and so, in lieu of his seal." It appears that, when deeds were drawn up, each party to the contract received a copy, and those which we find in the Library were probably third copies deposited there for safe custody and possible future reference.

Then there are tribute-lists, royal despatches and decrees, and letters from the king's generals and governors, as well as astronomical reports from those in charge of the royal observatories. We have even come across a document which is sometimes called the Will of King Sennacherib, in which he confides rings, ivory, crowns, and chains of gold, and other valuable objects to the priests of the temple of Nabû (Nebo), to be held by them in trust for his son Esarhaddon.

The second or Reference Department of the Library contains a vast number of works on many subjects. First we may mention those grammars, vocabularies, and school reading-books of the Shumerian language, already referred to, by which a knowledge of that ancient tongue was kept up in Assyria, and which the scholars of our own day have turned to such excellent account. Besides these, the Library contains many works on science, chiefly Mathematics and Astronomy, in both of which branches the old Chaldæans had made considerable progress. Then there are works on Astrology, to which subject far more attention was paid than to Astronomy pure and simple, and which we know was held to be a real science, not by these ancient peoples only, but for centuries

and millenniums after they had passed away. We also find tablets on Geography, which, however, contain little but lists of seas, rivers, mountains, nations, and cities; while the works on Botany and Zoology are only lists of plants and animals very rudely classified. But the subject most represented in Asshurbanipal's Library is Religion, especially if we include poetic, mythological, and magical works of a religious and semi-religious character. Among these a large number are bi-lingual—*i.e.* Shumerian or Akkadian with an Assyrian translation, generally interlinear.

Among the religious and mythological texts none are more interesting and important than certain extraordinary records, of high antiquity, dealing with the Creation and the Deluge. These will be treated of in some detail in the following chapter on "The Chaldæan Genesis."

But at present we may spend a short time in examining another very unique composition, which recounts an imaginary visit of the goddess Ishtar to the realms of the departed.

Ishtar was the Chaldæan goddess of love and beauty, and the original of the Phœnician Ashtoreth, whom the Greeks called Astarte. In later days her worship passed westward into Asia Minor, Cyprus, and Greece; both Artemis, whom the Romans called Diana, and Aphrodite, whom they named Venus, being her lineal descendants.

The record of her famous descent to Hades is the work of an unknown hand. It is to be read

on a remarkably beautiful tablet easily seen at the British Museum. Anyone who looks carefully through the show-cases of the Assyrian Rooms will find, not far from the Creation and Deluge tablets, a piece of smooth and almost uninjured terra-cotta, of a dark red colour, measuring about ten inches by three, and inscribed from top to bottom, back and front, with tiny arrow-headed or cuneiform characters. With such exquisite delicacy are the complicated signs impressed upon this piece of clay, that they will bear examination with a powerful lens; so minute are they, that they can scarcely be read without one. The tablet, like so many others found in the Royal Library of Nineveh, bears at its conclusion the definite statement that it was "the property of King Asshurbanipal." There can, therefore, be no question that this particular copy was made for his Library, and dates from his reign. But the King repeatedly tells us that he caused the old literature of his country to be re-copied, and the new copies placed in his Library for the readers of his own and subsequent days. And undoubtedly the original text, of which this fine tablet is a copy, is of immensely greater antiquity than the time of Asshurbanipal. We have good reasons for believing that the materials of which it is composed existed in much their present form more than two thousand years before Christ.

Nor is this all. The Legend of Ishtar, as we possess it, is in the Semitic language and we have no other version. But a careful examination shows that it contains passages from still older poems,

and is based on materials of pre-Semitic, or Shumerian origin. One simple indication of this last fact lies here. The poem recounts the visit of the goddess Ishtar to Hades in search of those life-giving waters which should restore to the upper air her lost bridegroom Tammuz. Now, one of the months of the Shumerian calendar was called "the month of the errand of Ishtar." This would seem to demonstrate that the Legend was in some form known to the Shumerians, or primeval population of Chaldæa, and that the Semites simply borrowed the story from the older inhabitants of the land, as they did ten thousand other matters of civilisation, culture, and mythology.

The real origin, then, of our Ishtar Legend is indeed thrown back into the hazes of an immeasurable antiquity. The third, fourth, or even fifth millennium before Christ may not be too early a date to assign to this strange dream.

Let us now attempt a translation of portions of it into English verse. The rendering will be as literal as possible, and almost line for line in accordance with the original. By the opening words we shall at once be reminded of our own great poet's expression, "the bourne from which no traveller returns."

"Unto the land whence none return, the place of gloom,
Ishtar, the Moon-god's daughter, set her firm resolve,
Yea, she herself, the Moon-god's daughter, set her mind
Unto the house of darkness and Irkalla's seat;
That house from whose grim portals none can issue more;
That road whose course permits no step to be retraced;

That home whose inmates are for ever barred the light,
And all the food they may consume is dust and clay.
Light they behold not, but in deepest darkness dwell,
Clad in a feathery shroud like dim and spectral birds ;
And round the doorway and its bolts the dust lies heaped."

As we read this poetic, but awful description, we perhaps recall the words of the eighty-eighth Psalm: "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" Or the pleading cry of Job (x. 21, 22): "Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of thick darkness as darkness itself, . . . without any order, and where the light is as darkness." In all these mournful pictures alike, the central thought is that the poor ghosts are for ever deprived of the kindly beams that illumine this upper world. With part of the Chaldæan description we may compare Daniel xii. 2: "Many sleepers in the land of dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, etc."

But to continue the poem:

"So soon as Ishtar reached the land whence none return,
She cried unto the warder of the gate, 'What, ho !
Open thy gate, open, I say, and let me in ;
For, an thou open not, and let me straight pass through,
I will strike down the door, shatt'ring its every lock ;
I will assail the threshold and by force break in ;
Yea, I will raise the dead to feast on those that live ;
Outnumbered shall the living be by all the dead.'

Then oped the warder of the gate his lips, and spake ;
Addressing the great princess Ishtar, thus he said,
'Hold, Lady, hold, strike not the gate unto the ground,
But let me go, and bear thy name before the Queen.'
So passed he to the Lady of the Ample Land.
'Behold, O Queen, thy sister Ishtar stands without,
Trying the mighty barriers of the portals there.'
To which the Lady of the Ample Land replied,
'Like some frail herb that sinks beneath the scythe, she comes,
And utters prayers as with the lip of drooping reeds.
What has possessed her mind, what seized her heart, to say,
"Ah ! let me weep the heroes who have left their wives,
The young wives let me weep, snatched from the bridegroom's clasp,
The tender babe cut off, his life-day at its dawn !"?
Yet, warder go ; fling wide the opening of thy gate for her,
And, as old rule requires, strip her of all she wears !'
Then went the warder and unbarred his gate, and cried,
'Pass, Lady, through ! May Death's dark City welcome thee,
And, at thy face, the palace of this land grow glad !'
Through the first gate he led her then, and closed it fast ;
He took the mighty diadem from off her head.
'Why, warder, takest thou the crown from off my head?'
'Enter ; for so, O Lady, bids the Great Land's Queen.'
Then led he through the second gate, and closed it fast ;
He took away the jewelled earrings from her ears.
'Why, warder, takest thou the earrings from my ears?'
'Enter ; for so, O Lady, bids the Great Land's Queen.'"

And thus the story proceeds. At each of the seven successive gates (note the perfect and sacred number "seven"!) the same scene is repeated ; and the goddess loses, in order, her necklace of precious stones, her breast-ornaments, her gemmed girdle, her bracelets, and finally, at the seventh

gate, the flowing garment of her body. Thus, stripped of her every possession, she enters the realm of the departed. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

And now the two goddesses are face to face, and words run high between them; till the Queen of Hades, in a fury, bids her messenger, the Plague-demon, take Ishtar away, and strike her with disease in every limb.

Meanwhile, things in the upper world had come to a strange pass. Deprived of the goddess of love and beauty, natural processes were at a standstill. Not only men and women, but even bulls and cows, regarded matrimony with an aversion that boded ill to the prospects of posterity.

Then the gods in heaven became seriously alarmed; and we read:

"The Sun-god went and stood before his sire, the Moon;
Yea, in the presence of King Ea flowed his tears;
'Ishtar,' he cried, 'from deeps of earth returns no more.'"

Then "Ea, in his heart's wisdom, made" a wonderful phantom, and sent him to exercise pressure on the stubborn Queen of the Underworld; and so successful was his mission that we soon afterwards read that she thus addressed her messenger, the Plague-demon:

"'Go, Demon of the Plague, and the strong palace smite!
Shatter the thresholds that upbear the lofty stones!
Bring the Earth-spirits forth, seat them on thrones of gold!
Then sprinkle Ishtar with life-giving streams, and straight
Set her before my face!'"

The Plague-demon executed his commission, and the released goddess returned to the upper air, receiving back, at each successive gate, the precise article of apparel of which she had been deprived.

Some obscurity hangs over the details of the remainder of the poem; but those who like a story of true love to end happily, and who feel any interest in the fortunes of the fair queen and her lost lover, will be glad to hear that this much at least seems clear, that she obtained permission to return for "Tammuz, the bridegroom of her youth" (as he is beautifully called), and, "to pour over him the pure waters, and anoint him with the precious oil," which should restore him to life and joy.

Such is, in outline, the Chaldæan legend of "The Descent of Ishtar." It is evidently intended, in part at least, as a great imaginative picture of the land of the Hereafter. But we may consider it for a moment from quite another point of view. It seems to be fundamentally a *nature-myth—i.e.* a poetic or mythological setting of a familiar phenomenon in the realm of nature. Ishtar is the goddess of the evening star; and Dr Jensen, in his inimitable work "Die Kosmologie der Babylonier," expresses the opinion that her descent into the underworld is a myth founded on the astronomical fact of the vanishing of the planet Venus in the west after a period of visibility.

But there is another view. Ishtar, in, perhaps, the earliest of her many aspects, was the Earth-goddess. She represented the great female side of nature, the fertile, nurturing Earth, whose lover is the ardent, radiant Sun. We know Tammuz to have been a primeval Sun-god ; and, bathed in his life-giving beams, his fair bride blossoms into all those countless forms of life with which her cherishing bosom teems. If so, the meaning of the myth may be this. The death of Tammuz is the departure of the glad, strong Sun-god for the winter months. As the days shorten, and the daylight wanes, he sickens, droops, and dies. The bright earth, his bride, loses one by one her summer adornments, even as Ishtar her jewels, when she passes in succession through the seven gates of Hades. Nor can she be comforted till, like Ishtar, she discovers those secret waters which shall restore to life and vigour the lost Sun-god. Then is the mourning bride gladdened at spring-time by the returning love and warm kisses of her husband.

The myth of Tammuz and Ishtar travelled westward till it became in Greece the well-known legend of Venus and Adonis ; and it is interesting to note that we can catch a glimpse of the story in mid-journey. For, about half-way between Babylonia and Greece, lies the little land of Palestine. Here, at Jerusalem itself, and close to "the gate of the Lord's house," the prophet Ezechiel (viii. 14), tells us that "behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz."

It is now time to take leave of the Royal Library of Asshurbanipal. But the most wonderful fact in connection with it has still to be mentioned. Ancient as it is compared with our own day, it was preceded by others immensely more ancient. A few years ago the French explorers in southern Babylonia discovered a library containing no fewer than thirty thousand tablets and fragments, and most of these date from a time two thousand years before the days of Asshurbanipal.

The temple archives of Nippur, brought to light by the Americans, had a collection of inscribed objects more than a thousand years earlier even than that. To seek the real origin of literature in Babylonia is like chasing the rainbow.

Asshurbanipal was, in many respects, an unamiable monarch. But we moderns at least have reason to feel grateful to him ; for his literary zeal and its practical results have provided us, as it were, with a marvellous phonograph by which we are enabled to listen, across the gulf of many ages, to some of the long silent Voices from the land of the Twin Rivers.

PART II

THE CHALDÆAN GENESIS

THE Biblical Book of Genesis is, deservedly, one of the most famous books in the world. Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans unite in paying it the highest honour. Whether we regard it as an historical work, full of picturesque sketches of an ancient world that has departed for ever, or as a treasury of homely, yet sublime, religious thoughts, we are alike impressed with the unique character of these venerable pages. A child-like simplicity, rendering its stories the delight of children, is here combined with an attempt to answer some of the deepest questions that mankind has ever asked. Can we wonder at the spell which the book of Genesis has exercised for ages upon all who have known it?

But, like most good things in this world, the ancient Hebrew book has not only been used, but abused. It has been applied to purposes wholly foreign to the intentions of its authors, who would be indeed astonished could they see the strange parts which their book has been made to play in the history of posterity, and all the marvellous conclusions which have been deduced

from some of its innocent data. The verses of Genesis are a slender basis for certain of the top-heavy religious theories, which, for lack of more solid foundation, seem likely nowadays to come rattling down on the heads of the passers-by. It would surely have amazed the sublime seer to whom we owe the first chapter of Genesis if he could have witnessed, after thousands of years of human progress, a Galileo reviled, and banished from the communion of the faithful, because, forsooth, he had something different to tell us about the sun than the old Hebrew knew. And when the Astronomers had won the day, not without much persecution and pain, it was a sorry sight, in our own enlightened century, to see the Biblical champions (forgetting the Biblical spirit) eagerly cast the same old stones at the heads, first of the Geologists, and then of the Evolutionists, as if, forsooth, the book had been made, not to be man's friend, but his fetter for evermore.

The present century is an age of research and criticism. Every portion of ancient literature is passed through the furnace and tried. Some books that have long been accepted are rejected as altogether spurious; others are dissected, and the true (as far as possible) separated from the false; others are anew interpreted. As Archæology and its kindred sciences progress, we obtain more and more light on the age and circumstances in which ancient books took their origin. Much will perhaps remain ever dark; much will

never be brighter than dim twilight; but here and there little gleams brilliantly illuminate the gloom; and the patient searcher of the past seems to see his way clear, with a joy scarcely comprehensible to any one but himself.

In such an age as this, so famous and interesting a book as Genesis could not fail to engross the attention of many a thoughtful critic. Its pages, its words, its very letters have been again and again submitted, during the present century, to a minute, a microscopical examination. It is, however, no part of our present purpose to enter into any such detailed inquiries. And, to speak quite candidly, the results at which the critics have arrived are so very diverse and contradictory that we may regard some of the most important questions as to age and authorship as still *sub judice*. And the rule for the public in all such cases, we know, is silence.

But there is one point upon which all learned opinion is now agreed, and which demands our special attention, and that is the composite origin of the Book of Genesis. That is to say, there is a general consensus among the critics of all schools that the book, as we now possess it, is not a single whole, written at a single time, by a single hand; but rather that it is a compilation, of which the component parts were originally produced at widely different times by widely different authors. It is not unlikely that the final form was not reached till the days of the Babylonian Captivity, about five centuries before Christ. But

nearly all the narratives of which the book is composed certainly existed in writing in the time of the Kings, and probably centuries before that; while, to reach the real origin of some of its material, would take us back to a truly stupendous antiquity. Let us cast a hasty glance over the Book of Genesis, as we can all easily do from memory, and we shall clearly see at least five elements. By elements are meant literary elements, or parts that must all have existed in writing long before the compilation could have taken place.

(1) First, and most important, we find the Hebrew element. Not only must we assign to this the stories of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but the spirit and setting of the whole book are thoroughly Hebraic. The unique genius of the race of Abraham presides over the writing of the narratives from first to last.

(2) An Egyptian element. This we meet with in the dramatic story of Joseph. A narrative closely resembling some parts of the history of Joseph, and written about the time of the Exodus, has been discovered among the ancient literature of Egypt.

(3) A Canaanitish element. To this we must probably assign the fourteenth chapter, with its narrative of the war of the four kings against the five, and the episode of Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem. It is likely that a written record of these events was preserved by the

Jebusite inhabitants of Jerusalem till long after the conquest of the land by Joshua, and would thus be available in later times for the use of the Hebrew historian.

(4) An Edomite element. In the thirty-sixth chapter of Genesis we find a list of the kings of Edom, introduced by these words:—"And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." Edom was a little country lying to the south of Palestine, and with which the Hebrews came into much contact in the course of their history. It is pretty certain that in this list of Edomite kings we have an extract from the Edomite state-records.

(5) And last, but by no means least, we have a Chaldæan or Babylonian element. This we can plainly trace in the earlier chapters of the book.

How does the Book of Genesis commence? First, we have a narrative of the Creation in six days, occupying the first chapter and the first three verses of the second chapter. In this account the divine name is always "God" (Elohim), and never the "Lord God"; so we call it the Elohistic narrative. Then comes another and different account of the Creation. In this the Divine Being is always the "Lord God" (Jehovah Elohim); and we call it the Jehovistic narrative.

No attempt is made to combine these two accounts. They are simply placed side by side.

All through the Book of Genesis we may distinguish the Elohistic from the Jehovistic portions; and it is quite evident that the latter were entirely unknown to the author of the sixth chapter of Exodus, for we there read:—"I am the Lord (*i.e.* Jehovah), and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them."

Yet in the Jehovistic portions of Genesis, the patriarchs are constantly using the name Jehovah, which the verse in Exodus says was not known to them; and we even read with regard to Isaac (in chap. xxvi.), the definite statement that "he builded an altar and called upon the name of Jehovah."

After these two Creation stories, we come to the Garden of Eden, and the narrative of the Temptation and the Fall. Here we are carried, in plain words, straight to Chaldæa. Eden, where "the Lord God planted a garden eastward," is probably the Edinu, well known to Assyriologists as the plain of Babylonia. Two of the rivers of Paradise are the well known Tigris and Euphrates; so the garden must have been situated near their junction. The sacred tree is a familiar object to the student of Chaldæan lore, and the cherubim that guarded it are represented by the winged colossi that the Assyrian kings loved to place at the approach to their palaces.

Passing over two chapters, we next reach a narrative of the Flood, or rather two narratives,

an Elohistic and a Jehovistic one. These, though somewhat interlaced, are not combined, and can be easily separated. The place where the Ark rests is not a mountain of Palestine, but Ararat, to the north of Assyria.

And finally, in the 11th chapter, we have the Tower of Babel or Babylon, which its builders erected on the plain of Shinar, or Shumer.

In all these narratives the geography is, we see, frankly Babylonian; and it powerfully suggests a Babylonian origin for the stories themselves. If, then, we succeed in finding narratives similar to these in the ancient literature of Chaldæa, which is far more ancient than that of the Hebrews, and written by the Chaldæans themselves upon imperishable monuments, we may consider that we have reached the literary sources of this Chaldæan element in our book of Genesis; or, to put it into other words, we may consider that we have found at least a portion of what we may call the Chaldæan Genesis.

This, then, is the subject to which our attention is directed at present; and when we have briefly reviewed what modern research reveals to us of the resemblances between the Chaldæan and the Biblical Genesis, we will devote our remaining space to answering the question, "How in all likelihood did these resemblances come about?"

First, then, as to the resemblances themselves. We shall find that they occur in four narratives —viz. those of the Creation, the Fall, the Tower of Babel, and the Deluge. So it is upon these

four narratives that we must concentrate our attention.

When Alexander the Great, King of Macedon, rather more than three centuries before Christ, conquered the Persian Empire, he overthrew a monarchy which had long borne sway over the ancient land of Babylonia. The sacred and imperial city Babylon, the Rome of Western Asia, was at that time the Persian king's capital; and the conquerors, feeling an interest in its venerable past, some years after Alexander's death requested a Babylonian priest, named Bêrôssos, to write a history of Babylon in the Greek language. He did so; and precious indeed would the book be to us moderns, if only it were at our disposal. But, unfortunately, it has entirely perished. We know, however, a little of what it contained from fragments that have reached us in a very indirect manner. Some of these fragments were copied by a native of Asia Minor, named Alexander Polyhistor, who was a slave at Rome about a hundred years before Christ; and from Alexander Polyhistor's copy they came to be embodied in the works of Eusebius, and another of the Christian Fathers. Thus have they come down to our own time; and thus for centuries it has been well known that the ancient Babylonians had traditions of the Creation and the Deluge which greatly resembled the accounts given in Genesis. It was, however, reserved for the latter half of our own century to unearth the literature of ancient Babylonia

and Assyria from the ruins of their forgotten cities, and so to obtain a direct knowledge of the original Chaldæan stories.

First, then, as to the Creation narratives. It is clear that there existed amongst the people of ancient Babylonia a strong desire to account for the origin of the world, and to set forth some intelligible theory on this profound subject. It seems equally clear that the explanations attempted by different minds in different places were not only dissimilar but often irreconcilable. That given by Bêrôssos was only one of several current stories; and, in the form in which it has reached us in Eusebius, is not only absurd but confused and self-contradictory.

It commences with darkness and an abyss of waters, in which resided the most hideous monsters, such as human figures with the legs and horns of a goat, and dogs with fourfold bodies, terminated in their extremities with the tails of fishes. A woman presided over this interesting collection; till at last the god Bêl came and cut the woman asunder, and of one half of her he formed the earth, and of the other half, the heavens. At the same time he destroyed the monsters. This is puzzling enough; but the explanation given of the allegory is still more so, for in this we are told that it was not Bêl who slew the animals, but that they died in consequence of being unable to bear the light.

We need not pursue the matter. For, in the first place, we cannot be sure that the narrative,

as originally written by Bêrôssos, has not been added to and altered, so as to now include two inconsistent accounts of the Creation. In the second of these accounts we learn, that, after the destruction of the monsters of chaos, their places were taken by animals and men produced by the mixture of the earth with the blood of Bêl. This blood of Bêl was, perhaps, the fertilising rain.

Cuneiform texts have been discovered which closely agree with portions of these strange legends reported by Bêrôssos. But, as has been said, there were different Creation-stories prevalent in the various parts of Babylonia.

Let us, therefore, direct our attention to one specially important Chaldæan account of the origin of the world. Here we find the fundamental thought that underlies all the stories—viz. that the watery abyss was the primal source out of which the ordered universe was evolved. This conception seems to point to Eridu, the ancient Shumerian city by the sea, as the original home of these cosmogonies. It reminds us forcibly of the chaos of dark waters over which the spirit, or wind, of God brooded (as we are told in Genesis), before light and order were summoned by the divine fiat. It shows us (as we are reminded by Professor Sayce) whence probably the Greek philosophers Anaximander and Thales, six centuries before Christ, derived their theories that all things originated in a watery abyss, and that men had developed out of the fish of the sea. It recalls the

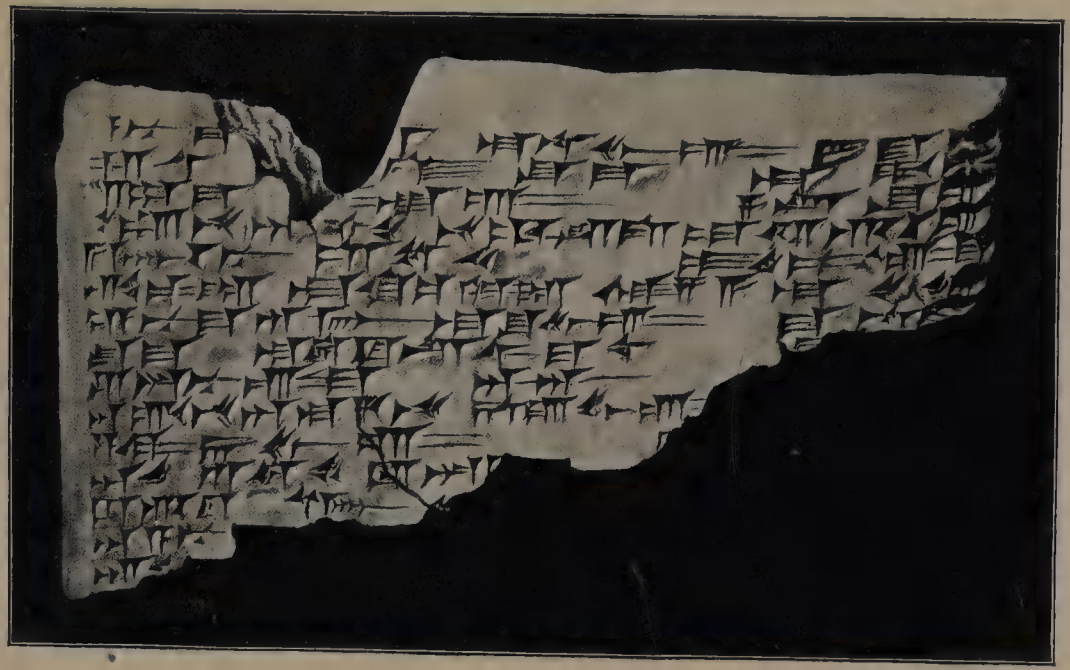


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Fig. 8.—FIRST TABLET OF THE CUNEIFORM NARRATIVE OF THE CREATION. (*British Museum*)

Okeanos and Tēthus whom Homer names as the parents of all things; and the primeval Chaos of Hesiod.

This Babylonian legend, to which attention is now called, is contained in a sort of Epic Poem, of which portions have been found among the ruins of the palace of Asshurbanipal, the Assyrian king. Unfortunately they are but portions; and a very large part is still unrecovered. From what has been found, we are able to trace a great general resemblance to the first chapter of Genesis. The work consists of a series of tablets or books; of which we possess the beginning of the first tablet; a fragment of the second; a large part of the third; almost all the fourth; the first half of the fifth; and considerable portions probably belonging to the fifth, sixth, or seventh. The several tablets seem to answer somewhat to the days of the Biblical Creation narrative, though there are many marked differences between the latter and the Chaldæan story. We have seen that the Greek work of Bêrôssos had made us acquainted with some of the Babylonian thoughts about the origin of things long before the days of cuneiform research. The Epic Poem in question has many striking resemblances to the account given by Bêrôssos. And another Greek writer named Heraklios, who lived about 600 years after Christ, tells us what conception the Babylonians had formed of the origin of the world, in language which proves him to have been intimately acquainted with this particular cuneiform Epic. Indeed, his account is

almost a translation of the first tablets of the series now in the British Museum.

As has been said, we possess only the opening lines of that tablet, and this is how it reads in English:

"When heaven above as yet was unannounced,
And earth beneath recorded not a name,"

i.e. when heaven and earth did not yet exist; for in this old-world phraseology to possess a name was equivalent to having an existence; to have no name was not to exist.

"The primal deep, the universal sire,
And watery chaos, mother of them all,
Blended in great embrace their several waves,
While yet no fen bore ordered growth of reeds."

When these lines are brought before us in the original language, we see not only how the thought of the watery chaos, as the primeval source of all things, is present here, as in the Biblical narrative, but we are struck by the fact that the actual Assyrian words for "primal," and "watery chaos," are identical with the Hebrew words used in Genesis for the same ideas.

"And when of gods there was not one produced,
Nor name pronounced, nor any fate set down,
Then were the gods created . . .
First Lukhmu and Lakhámu . . ., and they grew . . .
Then Anshar and Kishár . . .
Long was the lapse of days . . .
Till Anu [Bêl and Ea were produced]."

Here the tablet, unfortunately, breaks off, and we

can only guess at the sequel. But one point must strike us in the part which has been given—viz. that it expresses a kind of philosophic materialism in the mind of the narrator, which is very different from the childish conceptions of purely mythological legends. For, we notice, the gods are not in existence at the beginning of all things. It is not they who first create, though they may afterwards mould, the universe. On the contrary, they are themselves a product of the evolutionary forces of nature. At the back of all lies the great watery chaos. Here are the primeval forces, as well as the material, out of which an ordered world is to arise. Even the earliest gods are but a late result of their action and inter-action. A philosophy such as this seems scarcely primitive. Professor Sayce suggests that perhaps this part of the poem is less ancient than some of the other sections.

The second and third tablets are largely missing, and we need not much concern ourselves with their contents.

In the opinion of Dr Jensen, the former of these (the second) must have contained an account of the hostile machinations of the dragon Tiâmat (of whose subsequent doings we hear so fully in the fourth tablet), and perhaps also of the production of the monsters described by Bêrôssos, the division of the pre-cosmic gods into hostile camps, and the offer on the part of the god Bêl to capture the dragon.

In the third tablet we find Tiâmat preparing for the great struggle by arming various monsters

to assist in the conflict, and setting up her husband as their leader; and this is followed by an account of a banquet of the gods, who seem to have been at least as convivial as was good for them.

The fourth tablet we possess in an almost complete state, and it is entirely occupied by a long account of the great fight between the god Bêl and the dragon of chaos and evil. She is called Tiâmat, the very word used in the first tablet for that mother-deep who gave birth to earth and heaven. The conception of her is here so different that we seem to find in this another suggestion that the poem is, possibly, in its several parts, a compilation of materials from different sources. However that may be, Tiâmat here personifies all that is hideous and unholy, and great is the glory won by Bêl in vanquishing her. Finally the slain dragon is cut asunder by the god, who forms of one half of her the vault of heaven, and then builds and measures out the earth and sea beneath, much as Bêrôssos relates.

At bottom the whole story is unquestionably a nature-myth; Bêl representing the bright, early sun, both of the morning and of the spring-time, whose radiant energies overcome, after a hard tussle, the awful clouds of night and winter that have encircled the sky with their snaky coils of murk.

It was these oft-recurring natural phenomena which seem to have suggested the above cosmogony, or theory of the origin of the ordered universe as we see it, and the myth probably became

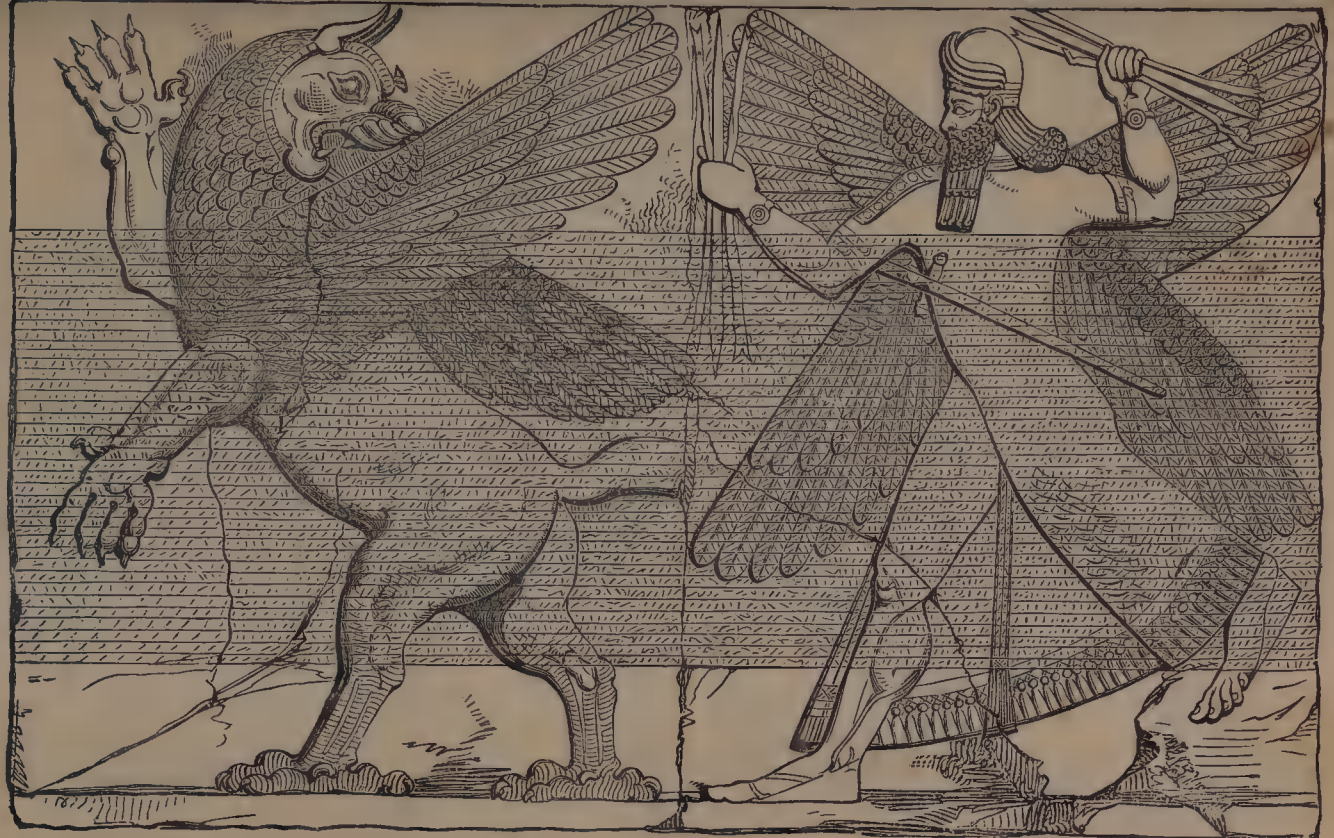

Fig. 9.—CONFLICT BETWEEN BÊL AND THE DRAGON TIÂMAT. (*British Museum*)

an allegory of the perpetual conflict between good and evil. The Babylonians and Assyrians loved to represent the scene in their artistic delineations, and there is at the British Museum a fine, though sadly mutilated, bas-relief portraying the battle, in which the wicked demon appears with some of the most orthodox characteristics of the mediæval devil.

This fourth tablet, with its long and detailed narrative of the conflict between Bêl and the Dragon, has no counterpart in the book of Genesis. It was, however, without doubt the origin of the apocryphal book of "Bêl and the Dragon"; nor can we fail to be reminded by it of the passage in the Revelation which tells us that "there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. . . . And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan."

When we come to the fifth tablet of the series, we find that the first half of it is complete. We may well compare it with the work of the fourth day according to Genesis, when God created sun, moon, and stars, to rule the day and to rule the night, and to "be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years."

Here is the cuneiform narrative:

"Then he prepared, as stations of the mighty gods,
Their starry counterparts, and framed the Zodiac;
Marked out the year, and traced designs upon the sky.
Twelve months he made, and gave each month three leading stars,

And after linking all the days to heavenly forms,
He fixed the place of Jupiter, to mark their bounds,
That not a single day might err or go astray.
Then he made firm the station of the Northern Pole,
And firm the point that should denote extremest South,
He opened mighty gates on either side of heaven,
And on both right and left he made them strong with bolts.
Then in the midst he fixed the lofty Zenith point.
Now the New Moon he kindled as a nightly form,
Giving the night into his rule ; and, as a sign,
Each month he set the bright tiara on his brow,
Bidding, as months begin, that he should shine at eve
And lift his gleaming horns to mark the evening sky ;
But at the seventh night should halve his diadem,
And stand in opposition at the fourteenth day."

The tablet here becomes too mutilated for connected translation. There is, however, one later fragment to which reference must be made, for it recounts the creation of the animals, in the following words :—

"The gods in their assembly formed (the beasts) ;
The mighty (monsters) of the earth they formed,
And made the living creatures of the (field),
The cattle of the field, the beasts thereof,
And all the things that creep upon the field."

It is pretty certain that if we possessed the whole poem we should find in it the creation of the vegetables, birds, and fish ; and, indeed, we have distinct indications, from hints in this work and from other cuneiform sources, that the Babylonians regarded man as originally formed of clay by the god Ea, working as a potter. This is wonderfully like the Biblical creation of man

from the dust of the earth; and bears a still closer resemblance to the statement in Job vi. 33, that man was formed of *clay*.

Taking a general view of the whole poem, so far as our fragmentary knowledge of it enables us to do so, we may plainly see, in spite of many resemblances to the book of Genesis, the following points of difference:—(1) The interpolation in the fourth, and to some extent in earlier tablets, of the story of Bêl and the Dragon Tiâmat, which Genesis entirely omits; (2, and more important) The whole conception of the Babylonian narrative is steeped in polytheism. A half-veiled materialism in the first tablet, and a belief in "gods many and lords many" in the succeeding ones, stand out in striking contrast to the simple and sublime ascription of all Creation to one God, by which the Hebrew writer has lifted his narrative to a far nobler level than the Chaldæan dreamed of. Here is the true greatness of the Biblical record. Its writer did not originate the material; but in the fire of his loftier faith he melted and entirely re-moulded it.

Let us now pass away from the Creation-narratives to the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man. They need not occupy us long.

The site of Paradise is distinctly localised in the Bible as somewhere in the direction of the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is, therefore, in the traditions of Eridu, the famous city, which, in remote antiquity, stood near their junction, that we should expect to find, if any-

where, the prototype of the Garden of Eden. Eden was, perhaps, Edinu, or the broad Babylonian plain through which the Great Rivers flowed. It is quite a mistake to suppose that Eden is, in the Bible, the name of the garden. What we are told is that "the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden"—*i.e.* in the far East (as viewed from Palestine), on the wide Edinu, or plain, He planted a garden; and its position on that plain is then localised by a reference to the rivers.

Turning to cuneiform records, we find that in a hymn of Eridu, mention is made of a sacred enclosure within which a mystic tree grew:

> "(In) Eridu there grew a shadowy, mystic tree;
> It was created in a pure and holy place.
> . . . . . .
> Within the sacred precincts of its house,
> That spread dim shadow like a forest wide,
> No man hath e'er set foot."

But the tree was no ordinary tree.

> "Its base
> Was the deep bottom of the earth itself;
> And on the couch of leaves Zikum reclined,
> The great primeval mother."

It was, in fact, a world-tree; and, like the famous ash tree of Norse mythology, symbolised the universe itself with its perennial vitality and growth.

The conception of a sacred tree was at all times dear to the Babylonians and Assyrians.

They constantly referred to it in their writings, and represented it on their bas-reliefs. Its form is generally highly conventional, and would puzzle a botanist to identify. Originally the cedar seems to have been the sacred tree. It was, indeed, a "tree of life," and endowed, according to the ancient hymns, with magic, health-restoring powers. On the bas-reliefs we see it attended by standing or kneeling cherubs, who hold in their hands the cedar cone, the emblem of its fertility. As time went on, the palm tree came also to be regarded as sacred; and it has been suggested that the conventional form assumed by the later Babylonian tree of life may be due to the amalgamation of two actual trees, the cedar and the palm. It has recently been argued that what the guardian spirits, or cherubs, hold in their hands is not a cedar cone, but a cluster of dates. If so, the "tree of life" would be the palm; whilst the cedar, with its magic powers, and on whose core the name of the god of wisdom (Ea) was said to be recorded, would correspond to the "tree of knowledge."

As to the Temptation and Fall of Man we cannot state that any cuneiform text refers with certainty to these events. It is true that Mr St. Chad Boscawen has recently found a Babylonian fragment which seems to belong to the Creation series, and which, according to his translation of it, looks wonderfully like an account of Adam and Eve's transgression. It speaks of an agreement to do wrong; a divine command

in a garden ; the eating of something from a tree ; a great sin; self-exaltation on the part of the sinners ; and even a Redeemer to whom their fate was appointed. All this indeed bears a marvellous resemblance to the narrative in the second chapter of Genesis. But the translation seems in several parts doubtful, nor can one quite avoid the suspicion that Mr Boscawen has been influenced, in his rendering of the original into English, by a desire, no doubt unconscious, to bring the Chaldæan statement into harmony with the Biblical one.

But even if we should be compelled to seek another meaning for this curious little fragment, there still remains to us one remarkable discovery which seems really to point to a Babylonian knowledge of the story of the Temptation. In one of the show-cases of the British Museum there is a little cylinder-seal, which, when rolled upon wax or soft clay, produces an impression which at once brings the book of Genesis to our minds. On this impression we see in the centre the sacred tree, rather conventionally treated, with a man seated on one side of it and a woman on the other ; while behind the woman we observe the sinuous form of a serpent, upreared as though for the purpose of whispering in her ear. Here, again, as in Mr Boscawen's fragment, it is possible that "things are not what they seem," and that the figures and the serpent refer to something quite different from the story of the Temptation of Man. Unfortunately, the seal bears no inscrip-

tion whatever. We are, therefore, left entirely to conjecture as to what the real import of the scene may be; but perhaps the most probable view of the case is the one which connects this seal with a tradition of the Fall.

We will next consider the Biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel. As it stands in the book of

Fig. 10.—IMPRESSION OF A BABYLONIAN CYLINDER-SEAL, PERHAPS REPRESENTING THE TEMPTATION. (*British Museum*)

Genesis, this account could scarcely have been written in Babylonia. For the writer says, speaking of the city, the building of which had been divinely frustrated: "Therefore is the name of it called Babel, because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth." In this statement there is an attempt to derive the name Babel from the verb balal, "to confound." But Babel is nothing more nor less than Babylon; and the real derivation of the name was probably

quite different from this. Hence it is pretty certain that the Biblical narrative was written far away from Babylon; probably in Palestine. But this does not preclude a Babylonian origin for the story itself; and the name of the tower—the Tower of Babel, as well as the name of the plain where it was built—viz. Shinar or Shumer (a part of Chaldæa) points clearly to Babylonia as the cradle of the tradition. How accurately, too, do the words, "They had brick for stone, and slime (*i.e.* asphalt) for mortar," depict the physical features of an alluvial land where stone was wholly wanting, and where the only building material ever used was brick, burned or sun-dried, and usually bound together by a cement or mortar of bitumen!

Babylonia was a land of towers; and so in later days was Assyria. From the temple of every city rose, stage above stage, one of those wonderful erections, which, in a country entirely devoid of natural elevations, towered imposingly above the face of the wide-reaching plain, suggested thoughts of the gods in heaven, and at the same time served for astronomical observation. Astronomy and religion were indeed so closely linked together in those ancient days that it would be difficult to say whether the temple-towers, or ziggurrats (as they were called), partook more of a scientific or a religious character.

In ascribing the Biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel to a Chaldæan origin, we are not limited to the evidence of the names. We have the express testimony of Bêrôssos to the existence of

the tradition among his countrymen. According to him the arrogance of men led them to deem themselves superior to the gods, and to attempt to build an immense tower whereby they might scale the sky; but the gods, offended by their presumption, overthrew the half-finished work by violent winds, at the same time causing them to speak different languages.

This is what Bêrôssos tells us; and a cuneiform text has turned up which confirms the accuracy of his account of the tradition. The text is, alas! sadly mutilated, but there can be no question of its import. We read in it of "the holy mound"; how "small and great mingled it in Babylon"—and the verb for "mingled" is the very verb used for "confounded" in the Biblical story—and how the god "in anger destroyed the secret design" of the builders, and "made strange their counsel."

There can, therefore, be no doubt that here again we have come upon a portion of that literary substratum on which the Chaldæan element of our Book of Genesis rests.

In the Middle Ages learned Jews, who travelled in the East, beheld the ruins of a wonderful seven-staged ziggurrat, or temple-tower, at Borsippa, a town which had once stood close to Babylon, and had even become a suburb of that city. They concluded that they had found the remains of the Tower of Babel. Possibly the appearance of the vitrified bricks, which had once formed the outer coating of the sixth stage, and which suggested destruction by lightning,

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Fig. 11.—RESTORATION OF A ZIGGURRAT, OR TOWER-TEMPLE.

gave them the idea. At all events the notion was quickly taken up by others; and the popular fancy has ever since connected these ruins, which are the remains of an historic building, not older than Nebuchadnezzar, with the dim and prehistoric Tower of Confusion.

And now we come to the traditions of the Deluge. Probably there are few recollections which take us back nearer to our own personal origin or genesis, than those associated with the dear old Noah's Ark that navigated the nursery floor, and which, if we were brought up in strict homes, had perchance the added charm of being the only toy permitted by the Sabbatarian powers on Sunday. Little recked our youthful minds that Shem, Ham, and Japhet possessed but a shadowy resemblance to "the human form divine," and looked rather as though they had been turned on a lathe; or that the relative sizes of the animals were not such as generally obtain in nature. Our intellects, like those of the folk among whom the Deluge stories first circulated, were decidedly uncritical. The narrative had a poetry about it that went straight to the unsophisticated heart.

In the year 1872 George Smith was busily occupied at the British Museum in sifting and sorting the fragments of clay-tablets which Layard had found in abundance among the ruins of Nineveh. In the midst of this patient labour he came upon one half of a tablet of a pale yellow colour, and covered with writing in three columns. In the third column, as he

deciphered the writing, he made out the following words, "To the land of Nizir the ship drew nigh. . . . When the seventh day came I sent forth a dove, and let her go. The dove went and returned; a resting place she found not and she came back."

George Smith had discovered the Chaldæan account of the Deluge! Indefatigably he continued hunting among the thousands of Assyrian fragments that lay within his reach; and had the good fortune to find other pieces of the same narrative. Nor was this all. Two more copies of the story came to light, and by means of these duplicates an almost complete text was obtained. When George Smith published his discovery a thrill of excitement ran through the minds of Oriental scholars in every part of the world; and even the general public shared something of their enthusiasm.

The Deluge tablet bore at the bottom the inscription common to the books of the Nineveh Library:—"The property of Asshurbanipal, King of the world, King of the land of Asshur"; and also stated that it was the eleventh tablet of a series. Other fragments of this series had already been found. And when, with endless pains, they had all been collected and arranged (as well as their mutilated condition allowed), it became evident that this story of the Deluge was but one episode in a great Epic Poem, that had originally filled twelve books or tablets.

To give a general account of this Epic Poem

would lead us far astray from our subject. Suffice it to say that the hero, named Gilgamesh, being smitten with a terrible disease which sapped his strength and tortured his frame, resolved to travel far away to the mouth of the Great Rivers, to seek healing from his ancestor, Khâsisâdra, who dwelt there in immortal vigour. After many strange adventures, Gilgamesh reached the Waters of Death, across which a ferryman (the Chaldæan prototype of Charon) conveyed him in a month and fifteen days; and came face to face with his great ancestor Khâsisâdra. Stating his case, he ventured to ask Khâsisâdra how he had come to be translated alive into the assembly of the gods, and received for answer that narrative of the Deluge which will now follow, and which the account given by Bêrôssos had led us to believe would (should it ever be discovered) bear a striking resemblance to the Flood of Noah. To better convey the poetic spirit of the original it is here translated, like the Creation fragments, into English verse:

Then Khâsisâdra spake unto his guest,
"To thee, Gilgamesh, will I tell my tale,
Great heaven's decree, and how my life was saved.
Thou know'st Shurippak on Euphrates' brink.
Full ancient was this burgh, when all the gods
Whose shrines were reverenced there, resolved its doom;
Their father Anu, Ennugi their chief,
Ninib who led their hosts, and warlike Bêl.

But, as they sat conferring on the deed,
The lord of wisdom, Ea, heard their plan.

And, to the reeds that grow for frames of ships,
He cried, 'O reed-bed, hear! and understand, O frame!
And thou who dwellest in Shurippak's walls,
Ubara-Tutu's son, I bid thee flee!
Build thee a house; construct a ship; forsake
All that thou hast, and make a push for life!

Into the ship bring every living thing.
Its vast dimensions shalt thou measure well,
And well proportioned be its size and form!
Then launch it boldly on the watery waste!'

I heard, and to my Lord, great Ea, spake,
'My Lord, I will observe and do thy word,
The building of this ship I will achieve;
But when the townsfolk and the elders press
To know my purpose, what shall I reply?'

Then Ea oped his lips, and said to me,
'Thus shalt thou answer all thy questioners:
"Since Bêl regards me with unfriendly eye,
No longer will I dwell in this your town,
Nor rest my head within the land of Bêl;
But to the watery depths will take my way,
That I may live with Ea, my great Lord."'"

After a few mutilated lines, we find the construction of the ship proceeding:

"Its form I modelled, and I drew the ship.
Six storeys built I, and seven parts I made.
Within, nine rooms I reared, with timbers wrought;
Added the oar, and all the needful gear.
Its outer walls with measures six of pitch,
Its inner walls with three, I made secure;
And to the workmen furnished oil for meat,
Bidding the skipper stow more oil away.

Then offered I a daily sacrifice.
Oxen and sheep, beer, wine, and juicy grapes,
Abounded like a river's generous flood ;
And like a New Year's feast we kept the time.
. . . . . .

And now I freight the ship with goodly store,
With all my silver and with all my gold,
And everything that draws the breath of life.
My many slaves and handmaids I embark,
The cattle of the field, and stranger beasts
That roam the wild ; and all the sons of toil.

It was the Sun-god fixed the fateful time,
Saying, 'When he who sends the dashing rain
Shall drench the evening with a copious flood,
Then enter thou thy ship, and shut thy door.'

The sign was given. The sender of the rain
Poured down at eve the promised copious flood.
Then watched I for the dawn, sore full of fear,
And terror seized me to behold that day.

So when I had embarked, and closed my door,
To Puzur-Bél, the skipper, I consigned
The floating palace with its varied store.

Now, soon as streak of red proclaimed the dawn,
Lo ! from the line where sky and waters meet,
An inky cloud arose, and climbed the heaven.

Then Rimmon, the storm-deity, awoke,
And roared his awful thunders in the midst.
Nebo, and Merodach the king, strode out,
Leading their warrior-hosts o'er plain and hill.
Nergal tore loose the anchor of the ship,
And Ninib followed with pursuing storm ;
While all the spirits of the lower earth,
Swinging aloft the torches that they bore,
With lightning flashes set the world ablaze.

The turmoil of the Storm-god raged to Heaven ;
It turned all brightness into dire eclipse ;
And earth was lost in hurricane and flood.

Man looked not on his friend, nor knew his mate.
The storm struck terror to the very gods ;
And in their fear they sought the highest heaven ;
They cowered like dogs, and hid them in their lair.

Then queenly Ishtar raised a mighty voice,
And, like a woman in her travail, cried :
'Alas ! the earlier life is turned to clay !
And all because I spoke a dire command ;
Yea, in the presence of the gods I spoke,
And bade a storm destroy the race of men !
Oh ! where is now the offspring I have borne ?
Like spawn of fish, it fills the ruthless sea.'

Thus mourned she 'mid the spirits of the earth ;
And, all around, in gloomy conclave sat,
With lips compressed, the sympathising gods.

Meantime the wind, the storm, the hurricane,
Had raged six days and nights. The seventh day
Awoke serene. Peace fell upon the host
Of warring winds and elemental strife ;
The sea grew calm, and the great fight was o'er.

I looked upon the main ; then raised my voice—
But all the human race was turned to clay ;
And where there once had stretched a wooded scene,
Now lay a naked waste before my sight.

I oped my porthole, and the light broke in ;
I crouched and sat me down ; and all my woe
Ran down my face in overmastering tears,
For all the world I saw was awful sea.

The hours rolled by. There rose an island-coast.
It was the land of Nizir we approached ;
And Nizir's peak seized, and held fast, the ship.
All day that mountain held the grounded keel ;
A second day, and then a third and fourth,
Five days and six, it hung upon the ledge.

But when the seventh dawned, I took a dove,
And sent her forth upon the waste ; and lo !
She flew about, and found in all the world
No resting-place to set her gentle foot,
And so returned to me. And then I took
A swallow in my hand, and sent her forth.
She flew about, and found no resting-place,
And so returned to me. And, at the last,
I took a raven, and I sent her forth.
The raven flew, and gazed upon the sea,
And saw the sinking waters ; then drew near,
Waded awhile, and croaked ; and came no more.

Now loosed I my live freight. Towards the four winds
I duly offered sacrifice, and poured
Libations on the crest of that high mount,
Setting the sacred vessels forth by sevens,
And, underneath, piled cedars, reeds, and herbs.

The gods afar perceived the goodly scent,
That soared above the sacrificial scene ;
Like flies they swarmed around me as I stood.

But queenly Ishtar, soon as she appeared,
Upraised the great carved stones that graced her neck,
Those stones which Anu made by her desire,
And cried, 'By the bright jewels of my neck
I swear to never lose the memory
Of these same gods, and all these days of woe.

Yea, though they all to the libation press,
Yet let not Bêl approach, for he it was
In reckless wrath called up the hurricane,
That swept my human family to doom.'

But Bêl, so soon as he approached the spot,
Beheld the stranded ship, and straight was filled
With fury at the gods, and powers of heaven.
'Who has escaped?' he cried; 'Let no man live!'

Then Ninib oped his lips, addressing Bêl;
'Who else but Ea has achieved this thing?
'Tis Ea knows the doing of it all.'

Then Ea spake unto the warlike Bêl:
'O warrior sage of all the mighty gods,
Reckless in sooth has this thy conduct been,
To send a raging storm upon the earth.

Let every sinner carry his own sin,
And every evil-doer suffer ill;
But shew thy mercy now, and stay thy hand.
Why raise a storm? Rather by far than this,
Let lions come, and waste the seed of men.
Why raise a storm? Send rav'ning leopards forth,
And wasting famine, and the god of plague.

Nor think that I divulged to mortal men
The high resolve and purpose of the gods!
To Khâsisâdra only did I send
A dream, and thus he learned the will of heaven.'

Then in the wrathful Bêl woke better thoughts.
He came into the ship; yea, took my hand,
And, with my wife low bowing at my side,
He led me up; then turned us face to face,
Standing between, and blessed us thus, 'Till now
A mortal man hath Khâsisâdra been,
But from this moment all is changed with him.
Like to the gods, yea, like our very selves,
Shall Khâsisâdra and his consort be,
And by the rivers dwell eternally.'

With that they bore us both far, far away,
And at the rivers' mouth bade us for ever stay."

There are many good reasons for considering this land, or island, at the mouth of the Great Rivers, this "land of the blessed," as we may call it, to be the real origin of the Biblical Paradise.

And now that we have seen our hero and his wife in a position where it is likely they will "live happily ever afterwards," we will make a remark or two upon their adventures.

The Epic Poem, of which their story forms a part, is of immense antiquity. Our copies of it are not older than the days of the Assyrian King, Asshurbanipal, or about six centuries before Christ. But we have abundant proof that the work itself is far more ancient, and composed of materials of stupendous antiquity. The whole Poem (so far as we can judge from the portions we possess) seems to have had, in its twelve tablets or cantos, a reference to the twelve Signs of the Zodiac. The eleventh canto, to which the Deluge story belongs, corresponded to the Sign of the Fish, which the sun passed through in January, a month called in the old Shumerian calendar "the month of the curse of rain."

The resemblances between the Chaldæan narrative of the Flood and the Deluge of Noah are so obvious that we need not pause to consider them. They extend to such details (for example, the sending out of the birds, and the offering of sweet-smelling sacrifice on the mountain-top) that we cannot believe them to be the result of mere coincidence. It will, therefore, be more interesting

to cast a glance at a few of the striking differences which the two stories present.

(1) There is an entire discrepancy in the names of the chief actors. No names like those of Noah and his three sons occur in this, or, indeed any other cuneiform document.

(2) The Chaldæan account makes a far larger number of people to be saved than the Biblical one, and draws no distinction between clean and unclean animals.

(3) The vessel which is called a ship in the Chaldæan account is called an ark or box in the Biblical. The explanation is, perhaps, this: The Chaldæans, living on, and at the mouth of, great rivers, were always so much given to navigation, both on these and on the sea, that it would appear to them an obvious necessity that a real ship should be built; while the Hebrews were never much of a sea-faring nation, and in all their earlier history had hardly any access to the coast at all, owing to the Philistines. Hence to them a mere box, if large enough, might seem a quite possible means of escape.

(4) The time during which the flood prevailed is much shorter in the Chaldæan story than in either of the Biblical ones. The Chaldæan deluge, too, seems rather to be the result of a hurricane driving the sea northward over the land, than of the opening of the "windows of heaven."

(5) The birds sent out by Noah are a raven, and a dove twice. Khâsisâdra sends first a dove, then a swallow, and then a raven. The dove, therefore,

in the Biblical account takes the place of the swallow, and to some extent of the raven too, as announcer of good tidings. It has been suggested by Professor Sayce that the reasons for this are — that the swallow, being called from Akkadian times the "bird of destiny," was too much associated with Babylonian soothsaying and superstition to be acceptable to the Hebrew writer; while the raven, reckoned an unclean bird by the Hebrews, was on that account deemed unsuitable to convey the tidings of peace, and guide the chosen few to quit the ark.

(6) But the most striking difference of all between the two narratives is in their theology. In the Chaldæan account polytheism pervades the whole atmosphere, and mythology runs riot. We find the gods plotting against each other, accusing each other, and taking sides. Their quarrels are far from edifying; and the great lord of wisdom, Ea, wriggles out of an uncomfortable position by something remarkably like a story. He first betrays his fellow-gods by telling Khâsisâdra of their intention to drown the world, and directing him how to escape; and then says, "I only sent Khâsisâdra a dream, and he found it all out from that." And we cannot but be struck by the very undignified spectacle which the gods present, when, in their terror of the deluge, they hurry away helter-skelter, like thrashed dogs to their kennel.

Still, in spite of all defects, these ancient folk have bequeathed to us a beautiful and touching

poem, worthy of our highest admiration; and we may be heartily glad that the writers of Genesis felt its beauty too. They deemed it far too good to be omitted. They purged it of its polytheism; they ennobled its theology; they emphasised its moral significance, and they preserved for their own nation, and for all the inheritors of their religious thought, a poetic and impressive story, that has ever been the delight of children, and of such of their elders as have had the happiness to retain anything of the child-like spirit.

And now we are brought to the last part of our inquiry. We have to seek an answer to the question:—"How and when did the Hebrews become acquainted with all this Chaldæan lore?" That it existed in the land of the Twin Rivers is surely proved by the foregoing evidence; and it is equally certain that it existed there, and in writing too, long before the Hebrews commenced to form a literature, or had even come to be a nation at all. Under what circumstances, then, and at what period did the Hebrews come into possession of the traditions of Babylonia, that raw material which they so deftly wove into the early chapters of Genesis?

It is probable that no single answer could cover the whole case. Even the Chaldæan element in Genesis is not the work of a single hand. It was most likely written at different

times, from material acquired in different ways. But, looking at the matter broadly, we might suggest three distinct answers to our question, and it is not improbable that there is some truth in each of them.

(1) We might suppose that as Abraham and his family, the founders of the Hebrew nation, emigrated from Ur of the Chaldees, so they brought with them, first to Haran, and then to Palestine, the ancient traditions with which they must have been well acquainted in their native land. The difficulty in accepting this explanation is the difficulty of believing that not only Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob, but the children of Israel all through their four hundred years' residence in Egypt, and their wanderings in the desert, should have retained and transmitted all this lore under circumstances so unfavourable to the maintenance of exact traditions. Still, some Oriental races are very remarkable in this respect, and a portion of the beliefs of Chaldæa may thus have been the perpetual heritage of the descendants of Abraham until the time came for the commencement of their national literature.

(2) Another view of the matter is this: That after the conquest of Palestine by the Israelites, and their establishment there as a settled nation, they came into contact at various periods with the powerful states of Babylonia and Assyria; and that thus they came to acquire the knowledge of which we are seeking the origin.

There may be some truth in this explanation. Certain critics, indeed, go so far as to name the time of the Captivity of Judah as the period when the material was obtained, out of which the first chapter of Genesis was composed. But, however this may be, much of the Chaldæan element of the book certainly existed in Hebrew long before that, whether we take the narrative of the Elohist or the Jehovist. When we remember, too, how hostile were the relations that generally prevailed between Israel on the one hand, and Assyria and Babylonia on the other, it hardly seems likely that the Hebrew writers should have placed in the forefront of their sacred literature materials directly derived from the literature of their bitterest foes.

(3) There is a third answer to our question, and every fresh discovery made with regard to the history of these ancient lands seems to add grounds for the belief that this answer is the most correct one. Year after year we obtain fresh evidence that, in the remotest antiquity of which we have any record, the influence of the great civilisation of Babylonia made itself deeply felt throughout a large part of Western Asia. Ages before the invasion of Palestine by the Israelites, ages even before the time of Abraham, we find Kings of Chaldæa making conquests of all the country between their own land and the Mediterranean Sea, and setting up political empires in these extensive regions.

It may, of course, be objected that conquest

does not necessarily imply profound influence in religious, literary, or artistic matters. This is quite true. But, as regards the case in point, we have proof, from the names of divinities and places, that the Canaanites and the neighbouring people were deeply impressed and affected by Babylonian religion. Mount Sinai, Mount Nebo, Bethanath, and Anathoth, are all names of Babylonian origin; and the chief divinity worshipped in Canaan, the goddess Ashtoreth, is nothing but the Chaldæan Ishtar.

Within the last few years an extraordinary discovery has been made, which not only strikingly confirms the view about to be expressed, but has thrown a flood of new light on several problems of Biblical archæology. On the east bank of the river Nile, about midway between the sites of the ancient Egyptian cities of Thebes and Memphis, there stretches a long line of mounds, which bear the modern name of Tel-el-Amarna. The palace of an Egyptian king, Amenôphis IV., once occupied this spot; and for thirty-four centuries a perfect mine of archæological treasure lay concealed here beneath the surface, unknown and unsuspected. At length, in the year 1887, the fates ordained that this ancient grave should yield up its dead. The agent they employed was a poor peasant woman of the country; and, by an accidental discovery on her part, the scientific world has been put in possession of that wonderful collection of ancient records which we call the Tel-el-Amarna

tablets. When examined, they proved to be an immense number of letters, forming an amount of literature equal, in bulk, to about half the Five Books of Moses. These letters all date from a comparatively short period — not more than about twenty years in length—nearly fifteen centuries before the Christian era. They form a vast state correspondence, carried on between the Kings of Egypt on the one hand, and the Kings of Assyria, Babylonia, and other states on the other; as well as between the Kings of Egypt, and their governors and vassal princes who held sway in their name, or under their control, in Syria and Palestine. Nothing could be further from our purpose than to enter upon a detailed examination of the contents of these letters now. Some are at Cairo, some at Berlin, and some at the British Museum. There is only one fact in connection with them that bears upon our subject; but the conclusions to which it leads us are of the highest importance. That fact is this. The letters, which are upon tablets of baked clay, are, with scarcely an exception, written in Babylonian cuneiform!

That such should be the case with the letters that passed between Egypt and Assyria or Babylonia is not surprising; but these are but a small part of the collection. The great mass consists of despatches from all parts of Northern and Southern Palestine, Phœnicia, Syria, and the Amorite country!

It appears that all this assemblage of lands

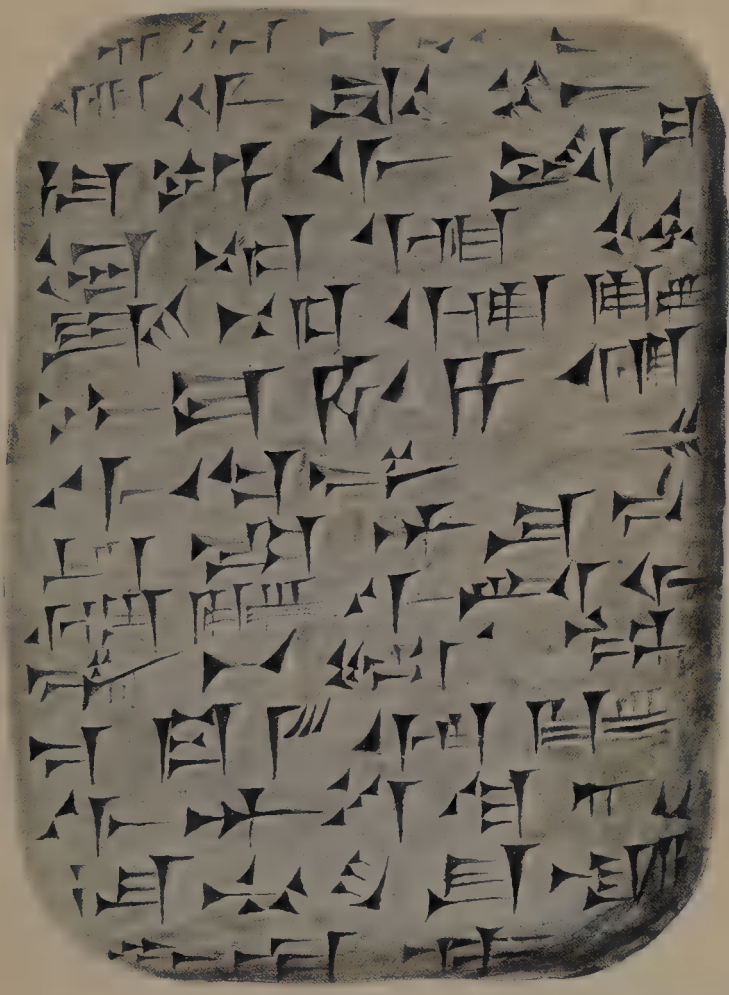

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Fig. 12.—A TEL-EL-AMARNA LETTER.

was under Egyptian sway. It stood to Egypt almost exactly as India does to the British Crown. Some parts were under vassal princes, whose action was controlled by Egyptian residents; others were under the direct rule of Egyptian governors. But the dominant fact is this, that, whether the letters were sent from north, south, east, or west; from native rulers or Egyptian envoys, the correspondence was always carried on in cuneiform, and the language used was as near to correct Babylonian as the writers (who certainly often composed and spelled very badly), could go.

Now all this was about a couple of centuries before the appearance of Joshua with his army of invading Israelites. Two conclusions are inevitable. One is that writing was in wide and general use among all these peoples of, and around, Palestine, ages before many of the critics have been willing to credit them with possessing this art.

Another conclusion is that Babylonian cuneiform having thoroughly established itself as the language of diplomacy in all these varied lands, the influence of Babylonian culture in many directions is certain to have done so too. For all those who have tried to acquire cuneiform can testify that it is not to be done, as in the case of alphabetic writing, by a few weeks, or even months, of study. Years must be devoted to the mastering of this complicated script; and the fact that the Egyptians and all these nations

of Western Asia were able to use it, means the existence of schools and libraries of Babylonian literature throughout a very wide region in, and around, Palestine. These libraries would be full of clay books, dealing with the religion, mythology, and traditions of Chaldæa, and all that old-world lore with which we have been occupied in the present chapter.

We may, therefore, safely conclude that, centuries before the Israelites entered Palestine, stories of the Creation, the Tower of Babel, and the Deluge, which had originally sprung from the land of the Tigris and Euphrates, were the common possession of the Canaanites and the various nations that dwelt on their borders; nay, that they were perhaps already well known to the Hebrews as one member of this group of peoples. But, be this last fact as it may, the Israelites had but to settle themselves in Canaan to become at once inheritors of a vast amount of Chaldæan lore; and thus we reach the most probable answer to the question we have proposed.

How the Hebrew sages dealt with the ancient traditions that formed the Chaldæan Genesis, every reader of the Bible knows. As they remodelled the venerable stories, they retained their poetry, while they changed their theology. Nobler thoughts of God possessed these Hebrew men, and here lay their true inspiration. Whence those thoughts were derived, it is not at present necessary to suggest. But they wrote as though in their heart's ear there ever resounded the

words, "I am Jehovah thy Elohim; thou shalt have no other Elohim but Me." And they have taught, to more than the sons of Abraham, the great lesson, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

PART III

ABRAHAM'S EARLY HOME

WITH the wanderings of the patriarch Abraham we have all been familiar from childhood. That is to say, we remember how his father Terah set out with him, his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot, from their home in Ur of the Chaldees, on a great journey towards the north-west; and how they travelled first as far as Haran, where they dwelt evidently for a considerable time, and where Terah died in a good old age. We recollect how, after his father's death, Abraham, in obedience to the divine voice, took his wife and nephew and "all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran," and commenced a second great journey, this time to the south-west, where lay the land of promise; and how, having arrived there, the patriarch, wealthy in flocks and herds, though possessing "none inheritance in" the land, "no, not so much as to set his foot on," went about from place to place, dwelling in tents, and leading a life closely resembling that of a Bedouin Sheikh.

All this, and probably a great deal more, we

know almost by heart. But how many of us could give any account of that far-distant eastern home from which the great migration took its start? What is Ur of the Chaldees beyond a name? Possibly the matter has never claimed a passing thought, or, if it has, the subject has been dismissed as one of those upon which, since the Bible tells us nothing, there is nothing to be known.

This last view, indeed, represented until quite recent years the precise state of the case. The very position of the city of Ur was not known to within hundreds and hundreds of miles. On the maps which accompanied Bible commentaries of a few years ago its situation may be seen hazarded somewhere far up in the north of Mesopotamia, towards the sources of the Euphrates. We now know that it is necessary to descend more than six hundred miles in the direction of the mouth of the great river, in order to find the site of Ur of the Chaldees.

And just as the position of the city was a mere matter of guess, so upon its character, surroundings, and history our minds were, till a short time ago, a perfect blank. But the light has come at last; and the object of the present chapter is to make some addition to the knowledge possessed by those whose only source of information on the matter has hitherto been the Bible, so that they may become, in a very allowable sense, "wise above that which is written."

Abraham's early home! We are not, it is to be hoped, expecting to hear in just what street old Terah lived, or to have a detailed description given of his house, garden, and furniture. Such particulars as these are wholly out of the question. The names of Abraham and his relations have never yet been found in any inscription discovered in Chaldæa. It is true that a name Abu-ramu, "the exalted father," occurs on early Babylonian deeds, but it has certainly no reference to the patriarch with whose story we are concerned. Records of any kind dating from this remote antiquity are comparatively rare, and much even of the general knowledge that is about to be presented is only attainable by indirect means. It is, moreover, doubtful whether Terah and his family, the ancestors of the Hebrew nation, ever lived strictly as townsfolk of Ur of the Chaldees, or whether they were not rather members of a pastoral population dwelling in the neighbourhood of the city.

The site of Ur, as well as those of other cities of southern Chaldæa, was first explored in the years 1849 to 1852 by William Kenneth Loftus. The ruins of Abraham's city were found contained in the mounds of Mugheir, which stand at a distance of six miles from the Euphrates, and near the point at which commences a line of date-groves that extend in uninterrupted succession along both banks of the river to its mouth. During the high inundations of the Euphrates

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Fig. 13.—THE MOUNDS OF MUGHEIR, THE SITE OF UR OF THE CHALDEES.

Mugheir is completely surrounded by water, and unapproachable on any side except by boats.

The ruins consist of a series of mounds of oval form, the longest diameter of which, stretching from north to south, measures rather more than a mile.

The name Mugheir is, however, specially given to a remarkable building, seventy feet high, which stands near the northern end of the mounds, and is the only instance of a Babylonian temple not wholly covered by rubbish, and yet remaining in good preservation.

It is built of large bricks; and from the fact that these are cemented with bitumen is derived the modern name Mugheir—*i.e.* Asphalt-town.

The edifice consists of two distinct and massive storeys of oblong form, the long sides being to the north-east and south-west. One angle, as is the case with most Chaldæan temples, points due north.

As each storey rises, it gradually slopes inwards at an angle of 9° from the vertical, for the purpose of enabling it to bear great superincumbent pressure; and to this fact we may in part attribute the remarkably perfect condition of the whole remaining edifice.

The lower storey is, moreover, supported by buttresses.

The whole building measures a hundred and ninety-eight feet by a hundred and thirty-three

(*i.e.* about 3 : 2), and there is but one entrance, which is eight feet wide.

This striking edifice stands on a mound about twenty feet high.

The whole of the outside is faced, to a thickness of ten feet, with red baked bricks, but the entire mass of the interior is built of partially burned or sun-dried bricks.

After Loftus's visit excavations were undertaken, in 1854, by Mr Taylor, British vice-consul at Busrah, and when Loftus returned to the spot, he was astonished to see what patience and perseverance Taylor had displayed in penetrating right through the solid mass of brickwork to the very heart and base of the building.

Yet all in vain! Nothing was found in this way to throw any light upon its construction or object.

In excavating, however, at the southern corner of the upper storey, at a depth of six feet from the surface, Taylor made a remarkable discovery. He came upon a perfectly inscribed cylinder standing in a niche formed by the omission of a brick in the layer; and when he afterwards sank shafts at the other three corners, he secured a precisely similar record from each. All these are now in the British Museum. The inscriptions upon them, when deciphered, give some answer to our queries regarding the ancient building in which they were found. They tell us that it was a tower-temple (*i.e.* a temple of special tower-like form, ascending

in stages), erected in honour of the Moon-god, the present edifice being a restoration and reconstruction of a far more ancient structure.

The king to whom this work of rebuilding was due gives his name as Nabû-nahid, which we know to have been that of a king who reigned in Babylon about five hundred and fifty years before Christ, and of whom more will be said later on in this chapter.

After recounting on the cylinders his pious work in the restoration of the temple, the king concludes by a prayer that the divinity thus honoured may bless and preserve from sin not only himself, but also his son, Bêl-shar-utsur, who is the well-known Belshazzar of the book of Daniel.

Among other discoveries made by Taylor at Mugheir was that of a house, or oratory, in a small mound near the eastern angle of the great temple. The ground-plan of this edifice has the form of a cross, and many of the outer faces of the bricks were found to be inscribed.

Perhaps the chief interest of this building is derived from the fact that it first served to settle the question as to whether the Babylonians were acquainted with the principle of the arch; for, running through the entire thickness of the walls, two regularly constructed semi-circular arches were found in admirable preservation, the bricks being wedge-shaped to form the vaulting.

After describing the above discoveries, Loftus

relates an amusing instance of the effect produced by the appearance of living men among these long silent ruins. He tells us that while he and his little party were exploring the mounds, their Turkish escort, from whom they had separated a short time before, passed them at a distance of two or three miles. Some of the officers, impressed by the huge ruined edifice on their flank, galloped towards it, and, when within a mile of Mugheir, caught sight of two or three human beings on the summit, who seemed to be watching the troops. This unexpected appearance on what they naturally supposed to be a deserted mound filled them with apprehension. So they at once halted, and, riding back with all speed, gave the alarm that a large body of Arabs was lying in ambush to attack the party.

Preparations were accordingly made for a stout resistance. The mules, servants, and baggage were gathered in the centre, the troops arranged round them in square, and the four cannon placed at the corners. In this compact and martial order they rapidly marched across the desert, till they reached a spot where, lo! they were joined by Loftus's party, who learned with surprise what a commotion they had unwittingly occasioned. For the whole alarm had arisen from the simple fact that, while Loftus was engaged in taking a few notes and measurements at the ruins, some of his personal attendants had climbed to the summit of the mound.

Such, then, is Ur of the Chaldees at the present time. To reach the days of Abraham we must go back to about B.C. 2300, or four thousand two hundred years from our own date. But how difficult it is to realise the meaning of such a lapse of time! To arrive at the date of the Norman Conquest, although most of our own country's history lies comprised within the period since that epoch, we need travel back little more than eight centuries. Nearly eleven centuries more must be traversed to bring us to the time of Christ. Yet, arrived at the time of Christ, we have retraced much less than half the distance to the days of Abraham; and the world must last on still four hundred years into the future, in order to bring us to a date as far after the year 1 of the Christian era as Abraham was before it.

It may prove interesting to inquire in what way we arrive at our knowledge of the (approximate) date which we ought to assign to the patriarch's life.

If we take the Bible for our guide, we find the Hebrew text and the Septuagint so entirely at variance with each other upon all these early dates, that we cannot derive any exact or certain conclusions at all. According to the former, the period from Adam to Abraham's entrance into Canaan was 2083 years. According to the latter, it was 3549 years. We do not expect any great precision in regard to these remotely distant times, but a discrepancy of nearly fifteen hundred years is beyond a trifle.

After the time of Abraham, the Hebrew and the Septuagint again prove irreconcilable; nor, in the period from the Exodus to the founding of the Temple, is the Hebrew text even consistent with itself.

Such statements as these may appear to some readers, who have never examined the subject, rather heretical; but they will be found in no less orthodox an authority than the Oxford Bible.

In spite of all these difficulties, Bishop Ussher, the author of our conventional Biblical chronology, seems to have steered a pretty correct course in arriving at about B.C. 2000 as the date of Abraham's call.

Let us now see how we may approach the question from quite a different point from that used by Bishop Ussher and the earlier chronologists.

The basis of the following considerations is furnished by the fourteenth chapter of Genesis.

In this celebrated chapter we read that, while Abraham (at that time still named Abram) was leading the life of a pastoral nomad in the land of Canaan, four kings of the far East came with an army into the populous regions of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Their object was not a peaceful one. They had brought their forces across twelve hundred miles of desert, or else, more probably, by a still longer, if easier, northern route, in order to subdue the little western land. So successful was their warfare, that the Kings

of Sodom, Gomorrah, and three other neighbouring cities were not only overthrown, but reduced to complete subjection. For "twelve years," we are told, "they served" (*i.e.* paid the tribute of vassalage to) the chief of the conquering four, who, though he had returned to his own distant land, was yet able to keep the yoke of his sovereignty firmly upon their necks.

At length, however, the prostrate kings recovered sufficient courage to make a push for liberty. "In the thirteenth year they rebelled." But the following year brought their old conqueror and his three confederates down upon them, and a great pitched battle was fought in the Vale of Siddim. This was the famous conflict of the "four kings against five." It ended in the complete defeat of the latter. The Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were slain, and their army cut to pieces or dispersed. The invaders, thus for the second time victorious, followed up their success in the field by sacking the cities of their foes. "And they took," we read, "all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way."

But they carried off something besides goods and victuals. They made captives of some of the inhabitants of the conquered cities, and among these was Abraham's nephew Lot, who dwelt in Sodom. The news was at once conveyed by a fugitive from the battle, or from one of the pillaged cities, to the patriarch Abraham, whose home at that time was by the oaks (or terebinths) of

Mamre. His wrath and pity was stirred, and the brave old sheikh rose nobly to the occasion. Not a moment was to be lost. His "trained servants, born in his house," numbered three hundred and eighteen, and with these, and probably his friend Mamre, and the two brothers of the latter, he set off in hot haste after the victorious forces, which were proceeding northwards. By the time they had reached Dan, in the extreme north of Canaan, he had come up with them. Laden with booty, and impeded by their long line of captives and spoil-bearers, they were probably marching slowly, and with little care. Night came on, and now was the moment for Abraham's irregulars to make a successful coup. Falling suddenly and vigorously upon the unsuspecting troop, they struck such panic into their enemies, that they put them to tumultuous flight, and had the satisfaction, not only of rescuing Lot and the other captives, but of recovering all the spoil.

Such is the picturesque and graphic narrative as given in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. Let us now see how it assists us in determining the date of Abraham.

To do this, we must examine closely the names of those four allied kings, who, in these early days, came so far from the east for the subjugation of Palestine. They are given in Genesis as follows :—

Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, who was evidently the head and leader of the expedition.

Arioch, King of Ellasar.
Amraphel, King of Shinar.
Tidal, King of Nations, or King of Goiim, as the Revised Version (more correctly) has it.

Turning to the cuneiform literature of ancient Babylonia, we find light thrown upon the first three of these names. Let us begin with the second, Arioch.

(1) Arioch, King of Ellasar. It is highly probable that this man was identical with a king, many of whose inscriptions we possess, and who ruled over a city called Larsa, or Larsam, in southern Chaldæa. Although in these inscriptions the king's name is generally read Rim-Sin, it is also written in such a manner that it may be equally well read Eri-Aku, and this last form might, with slight alteration, be corrupted into Arioch.

(2) Amraphel, King of Shinar. Shinar, as we saw in the first chapter of this volume, is Shumer —that is, strictly speaking, southern Chaldæa; but, that the Hebrews regarded it as extending sufficiently far north to include the city of Babylon within its borders, is proved by the story of the Tower of Babel, as given in the eleventh chapter of Genesis. For whilst it is there implied that the Tower was built on the plain of Shinar, or Shumer, its very name shows that the site was in, or close to, Babylon itself.

Who, then, was this Amraphel, King of Shinar?

Very possibly the famous King of Babylon, named Khammurabi, well known to the student of cuneiform literature, and whose inscriptions are among the most numerous and interesting which we possess from these early days.

The differences between the two names, Amraphel and Khammurabi, are, owing to certain circumstances into which we need not enter now, less than they at first appear, and are by no means so great as to render the identity improbable.

It so happens that one of King Khammurabi's inscriptions mentions, as a contemporary of his own, that very Eri-Aku whom we have seen to be probably identical with the Arioch of Genesis. Hence it follows, that if either one of our two identifications be correct, it gives considerable support to the other. The two probabilities strengthen one another into something like certainty.

(3) Chedorlaomer, King of Elam. Elam was that mountainous country extending to the east of Chaldæa, of which the capital was Susa (the Biblical Shushan), and with which the Kings of Babylonia, and, in later days, the Kings of Assyria, were so often at war.

But we may well ask, Is it likely that in the remote times of the patriarch Abraham, a King of Elam should have stretched forth a conquering arm right across the plain of the Great Rivers and the vast desert beyond, till he reached and

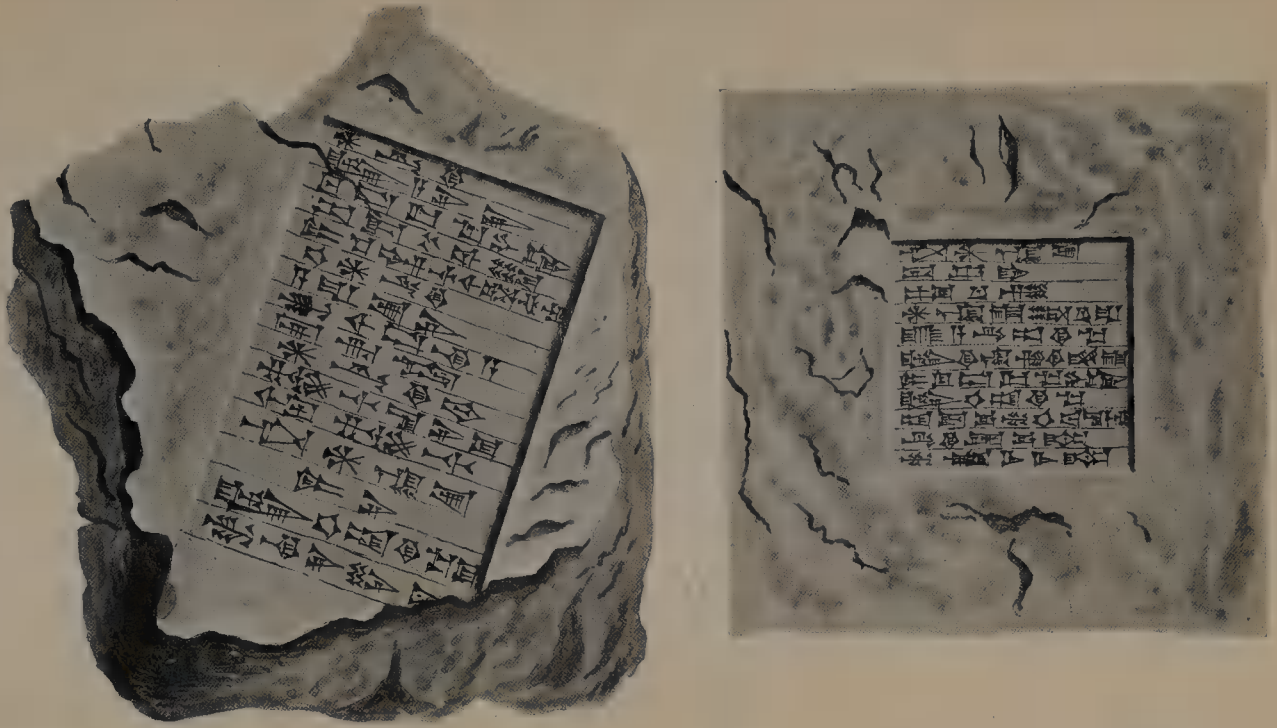

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Fig. 14.—BRICKS OF KUDUR-MABUK AND HIS SON ERI-AKU (RIM-SIN), FROM THE SITE OF UR.
(*British Museum*)

overthrew the rulers of Canaan? Does not such an event, attributed to men of the third millennium before Christ, savour of romance rather than of sober history?

In reply to such a query, it may be stated that not only have recent discoveries in Babylonia proved the existence of extensive empires stretching to the west in times far earlier than those which we are now considering, but the particular story in Genesis receives a striking confirmation from the inscriptions of Eri-Aku and his father.

Eri-Aku's father was called Kudur-mabuk, and his name occurs in many inscriptions along with that of his son. He ruled over a part of the land of Elam, as well as over all southern Chaldæa.

Let us listen first to an inscription of Eri-Aku, and then to one of his father, Kudur-mabuk, in both cases found on bricks from the site of Abraham's city, Ur of the Chaldees.

(1) "I am Eri-Aku, the valiant hero, appointed by Bêl; the legitimate shepherd (*i.e.* ruler), the fosterer of Ur, the King of Larsa, the King of Shumer and Akkad; the son of Kudur-mabuk, the father (*i.e.* prince) of Emutbala (a district in Elam). The extent of Ur I have enlarged. Its . . ., the ancient one, which had fallen to decay, I have consecrated to the Moon-god, my king; a great wall, like a mountain, I have built anew; the *débris* which covered it I have cleared away (?)."

This inscription clearly shows that Kudur-mabuk, the father, was a prince of Elam. But the following inscription by Kudur-mabuk himself takes us much further.

(2) "To the Moon-god, his king, Kudur-mabuk, father (*i.e.* prince) of the Amorite-land, or the West country (*i.e.* Syria and Palestine!), son of Simtishilkhak; when the Moon-god heard his prayer; has built the temple E-Nun-makh, for his own life, and the life of Eri-Aku his son."

Here we have the distinct statement that this early ruler of Elam, Kudur-mabuk, exercised sway over the distant land of Canaan; and as he was the father of Eri-Aku, he must, if the latter is identical with Arioch, have done so at just about the time when, according to Genesis, Chedorlaomer and his allies had effected conquests there. We cannot but regard this fact as a remarkable confirmation of the Biblical statement respecting an apparently improbable event.

But should we be justified in affirming that Chedorlaomer (more correctly Kudur-Lagamar), the Biblical conqueror of Palestine, and Kudur-mabuk, the cuneiform conqueror of Palestine, are one and the same man? Certainly not; for, although the first part of each name is precisely the same (Kudur), the second halves are so different (Lagamar and mabuk), that no etymologist, even with the most elastic conscience, could venture to connect them.

"Kudur" was a favourite beginning for the

names of kings of Elam, as we learn from Assyrian, as well as Elamite inscriptions. But no king of the name Kudur-Lagamar has been yet heard of outside the Bible. The following fact, however, has been clearly ascertained, that there was a god worshipped by the Elamites under the name Lagamar; and since the various nations of this part of the world had a habit of introducing the names of their gods into their own names, the combination Kudur-Lagamar (or Chedorlaomer) is a most natural and probable one. If no cuneiform record has yet been found mentioning a king Kudur-Lagamar, there is nothing whatever to render it unlikely that one may at any time be discovered.

Supposing, then, that the above suggested identifications are correct, we may see in a moment what light they throw on the date of Abraham. Assyriologists are, for various reasons, of opinion that the great Babylonian king Khammurabi (and therefore his contemporaries Eri-Aku and the others) reigned in the twenty-third century before Christ. So on this ground we assign about the same date to the patriarch; and we find that it is not very different from the date proposed by Bishop Ussher.

There is one more important and interesting fact to help us in the matter.

Centuries and centuries rolled by after these early times. Dynasty after dynasty rose and fell

in Babylonia, and the mighty colossus of the north, Assyria, became the dominant power in Western Asia. The Assyrian kings were often at war with Elam, and the last one of importance, Asshurbanipal (about whom a great deal was said in the first chapter, in connection with the Library of Nineveh), after a long and sanguinary struggle, completely subjugated the land of Elam. Expatiating, in his inscription, with savage glee on the desolation he had wrought in the vanquished country, the Assyrian king goes on to tell us that he found there the statue of the goddess Nana, which, ages before, an Elamite prince had carried off from a city of Chaldæa, called Erech. He informs us, moreover, that the goddess had greatly objected to her residence in Elam—"a place," says he contemptuously, "which ill became her,"—and had said at last, "Asshurbanipal shall bring me out of wicked Elam, and restore me to E-ana" (her temple in Erech). Of course the lady's commands were obeyed. "I grasped the hand of the great goddess," says Asshurbanipal, "and amid joy of heart she took a favourable journey to E-ana. On the first day of the month Chisleu I brought her into Erech, and settled her for the future in a sanctuary which she loved."

The details of this little episode throw an interesting gleam of light on the theology of the period. But our chief reason for considering it here has still to be mentioned.

Asshurbanipal, in one of the accounts which he gives of the event, says that the Elamite who had

originally committed the theft of the goddess Nana was named Kudur-Nankhundi (another "Kudur," we observe!). "Not reverencing the name of the great gods"—we are reading from Asshurbanipal—"and relying, in bewilderment of mind, on his own power, he had laid hands on the temples of Akkad, and overthrown the land of Akkad. But when the days were accomplished, and the appointed time had come, the great gods beheld the deeds that had been done, and, after *sixteen hundred and thirty-five years*, avenged the desolation wrought by the Elamite."

Here, then, we have a firm point on which to take our stand.

Asshurbanipal's conquest of Elam belongs to a time when the chronology is a matter of certainty; and, as ample materials then existed for reckoning back at least as far as 1635 years, we may with confidence add 1635 to the year of Asshurbanipal's conquest—viz. about B.C. 650, and obtain B.C. 2285 as the date of the Elamite's successful raid upon the cities of Chaldæa.

But who was this Kudur-Nankhundi, whose date we have thus fixed? Was he the same man as Kudur-Lagamar (Chedorlaomer)? Was he the same as Kudur-mabuk? We have no right to identify him with either; and, unfortunately, we know at present nothing more about him than has been just stated. But the fact that his date so nearly coincides with the probable date of the other two Kudurs, and the additional fact

that the first half of his name is precisely the same as the first half of theirs, seem to point to his being at least of the same family of Elamite princes; and when we consider the stress which Asshurbanipal lays upon this invasion of Chaldæa by Kudur-Nankhundi, we may perhaps think ourselves right in regarding the latter as the founder of Elamite rule there, and Chedorlaomer as one of his nearest successors.

Thus we are again brought to the twenty-third century before Christ as the probable date of Abraham. We are led, too, not only to the date, but to a possible chain of cause and effect. The Elamites undoubtedly established a powerful and lasting rule in Chaldæa, and it so happened that they made the ancient city of Ur their head-quarters. Had this fact anything to do with the emigration of Abraham and his father? Is it possible that the new rule was so distasteful to them, that they preferred exile to oppression, and sought, from love of liberty, as many have done in more recent history, a home of freedom in the Far West? Were they, in short, the Pilgrim Fathers of the third millennium before Christ?

To such questions the answer must be mere conjecture. But we should, perhaps, be interpreting these events in harmony with the true spirit of the Biblical narrative, if we were to imagine Terah and his children as having been worshippers of the One God while still living

at Ur of the Chaldees, and as having, under the mild sway of the native kings, enjoyed liberty of conscience to worship their own God in their own way ; but that when the Elamite conquest had taken place, this condition of things was changed, the fanaticism of the new rulers tolerating no non-conformity with the state-religion.

Of course, this view is nothing but surmise. Yet, if it should represent the truth, as it may do, what higher divine call could the patriarch have received than the voice of conscience, bidding him forsake all rather than apostatise, and encouraging him to confide in that heavenly guidance which never abandons those who place right before worldly advantage?

Let us now look a little at the city and the country which Abraham and his family quitted for the unknown land of promise.

From the inscription of Eri-Aku, which we have just read, we may gather that in that king's days, which we have concluded to be about the time of Abraham, the city Ur was already ancient; for mention is there made of decay and restoration, of the accumulation and clearing away of the rubbish of the past. From other sources of information we find that the city was, indeed, very old even in the time of Abraham. Centuries before his date—certainly as many as five—we find kings of Ur reigning and building temples there. A short time ago we used to speak of

these kings as representing the First Dynasty of Ur. But in Chaldæan matters there seems to be no finality attainable, and recent explorations at the site of Nippur have revealed to us a far more ancient line of kings reigning at Abraham's city.

Leaving, however, these earliest rulers, at all events for the present, and confining our attention to what we must now call the Second Dynasty, we find that one of the most remarkable of these ancient kings was named Ur-Gur. Remote as was the date of this monarch—probably not much less than 3000 B.C.—we yet possess a large number of his inscriptions. His bricks and tablets are, indeed, met with in greater abundance than those of any other ruler of Chaldæa till we come right down to that other great builder, Nebuchadnezzar, who flourished in the sixth century before Christ. The British Museum is also the fortunate possessor of a tiny personal relic of King Ur-Gur—viz. his signet seal, one of those perforated cylinders of hard stone, which, when rolled along like a rolling-pin, produced their impression on wax or clay.

The memory of this ancient king was preserved and honoured for many ages in Chaldæa. Antiquarian interest is not a development peculiar to modern days. Learned men, in the great civilisations of the past, were often fired with a passionate love of antiquity, and an ardent zeal for deciphering and perusing its venerable pages. No country, perhaps, ever produced more of such men than

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Fig. 15.—CYLINDER-SEAL OF UR-GUR, AND ITS IMPRESSION.
(*British Museum*)

Babylonia, and no one among the Babylonians seems to have been more under the influence of the antiquarian passion than their last native king.

This monarch, whose fate it was to be overthrown at last by Cyrus the Persian, was named Nabû-nahid. He reigned at about the middle of the sixth century before Christ; and while more practical men would have been busy strengthening the defences of the country against the threatened invasion, which finally swept the sceptre from his hands and from those of all his race, he was deeply engrossed in the search for the foundation-stones of ancient temples. The results of his investigations he recorded on clay cylinders for the interest of posterity.

Mention was made, on page 122, of four of these cylinders, all bearing the same inscription, which were found in the wall of the tower-temple of the Moon-god at Ur of the Chaldees. The following is a translation of what King Nabû-nahid there says of the temple in question:—

"Ur-Gur, an earlier king, had built, but not completed it; his son Dungi brought it to completion. It was by the inscription of Ur-Gur and Dungi, his son, that I discovered that Ur-Gur had built that tower-temple, but had not completed it, and that Dungi, his son, had brought it to completion. At the present time that tower-temple had grown old, and I undertook to construct it, as in the olden days, of bitumen and bricks, upon the ancient foundation which

Ur-Gur and Dungi, his son, had laid. And for the Moon-god, the lord of the gods of heaven and earth . . . I did found and execute it."

Sometimes, in relating his success in the search for these ancient foundations, King Nabû-nahid tells us that, when at last he caught sight of the venerable stone with its inscription and symbolic reliefs, he was seized with an overpowering sense of awe. In one place he says:

"Then was I terror-struck, and fear came upon me. I spake thus to myself: 'The (ancient) king had built this temple, and caused the Sun-god, the great lord, to dwell therein. Me have the gods appointed to restore that temple, as in the olden time.' So I lifted up my hand and prayed to Marduk: 'O lord, head of the gods, prince Marduk, without thee thy dwelling-place cannot be founded, nor its enclosure completed. Who can do aught besides thee? O lord, may I, by thy sublime command, do that which is pleasing in thy sight!'"

And can we look upon these bricks, these monuments of hoary antiquity, without a feeling, if not of religious awe, like Nabû-nahid, at least of reverence? They are now nearly twenty-five centuries older than they were when the last king of Babylon lived; and yet we can still read on them in clear and almost uninjured characters the pious deeds of Ur-Gur and his son Dungi.

We find that these early princes built temples in many of the cities, and in honour of many of the gods and goddesses, of Chaldæa, and that

Ur-Gur was the founder of the rampart-wall of Ur, that very wall, probably, which Eri-Aku afterwards restored in Abraham's days. Their power was evidently great, and they call themselves kings of both northern and southern Chaldæa.

We may now inquire what race, or races, of men dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees and its neighbourhood. Who were Abraham's fellow-countrymen before he left his home and became a wanderer among strangers in the West?

It is probable that even in the very earliest times of which we have any knowledge, the population was somewhat mixed; but we may be quite sure that by far the largest element there, in all those most ancient days, was Shumerian. Reference to the first chapter of this volume will show that by the Shumerians we mean the southern branch of that great race who peopled Chaldæa as far back as we know anything about the country. The northern branch comprised the Akkadians; and the two branches were closely akin, their languages being only two different dialects of the same speech.

Whence these people originally came, we can but conjecture. Several indications, however, lead to the belief that they had descended into the plain of the Great Rivers from some northern and mountainous land, such as Elam or Media, where races, which may be regarded as their cousins, continued to dwell throughout historical

times. But we have no distinct record of any such immigration. To us the Shumero-Akkads are the aborigines of Chaldæa, and they had attained a high civilisation there at a stupendously ancient date.

If we ask to what stock of men they belonged, their language, religion, institutions, laws, and racial characteristics all combine to answer that they were not Indo-Europeans, like ourselves and most of the nations of Europe, nor Semites like the Hebrews, Arabs, and Assyrians, but men of the great Yellow Race, and therefore akin to Turks, Tartars, and Chinese.

To believe that people of this stock could, unaided, have carried progress and culture so far as we find them advanced in ancient Chaldæa, was rather difficult for those who first began to weigh the evidence, and some distinguished scholars have fought hard in defence of a contrary theory. But the resistless logic of facts has proved victorious along the whole line, and has placed these brilliant Mongols in the proud position to which they are entitled. We are forced to regard them, not only as pioneers in the march of progress in the olden time, but as men whose skill and industry made a great country rich and prosperous for ages, who invented an art of writing, who recorded their doings for the interest of succeeding generations, who formed a literature which subsequent centuries could do little but copy, and whose civil polity had in it such elements of reason,

justice, and mercy, that the fiercest storms of political revolution and foreign conquest could never overthrow it.

There were several minor races that contributed something to the population of early Chaldæa, such as the Cossæans and the Elamites, but we need not now dwell upon them. They were themselves akin to the Shumerians. They came down upon the plain, from time to time, as mountaineers, hardy and wild, but, though they sometimes effected conquests, and even established dynasties, the genius of the more civilised and settled race quickly overcame them. They were speedily tamed and absorbed.

There is, however, one stock of men about whom a little more must be said; for, while they borrowed much from the Shumerians and Akkadians, they also contributed much to them, and are to this day a potent factor in the world's history. These are the Semites.

In what region we are to seek the original home of this remarkable race—the ancestors of the Hebrews, Assyrians, Arabs, Syrians, and Phœnicians—is still a matter of some uncertainty. Professor Sayce thinks there is much likelihood that it was "in the desert on the western side of the Euphrates," and therefore in close "proximity to the Shumerian kingdoms of Chaldæa." But, however that may be, there seem abundant grounds for the belief that the principal immi-

gration of the Semites into Babylonia took place from the north.

It is important to remember that, great as was the part which the Semites were destined to play in the later history of the land, they had no share whatever in the foundation of the Shumerian civilisation.

They were at first pastoral nomads, moving about on the boundless plains according to the requirements of their flocks and herds; and over their heads, except the vault of heaven, no more permanent roof ever stretched than a tent of goat's hair.

These children of the desert had, of course, the qualities natural to such an existence. A noble spirit of independence, a love of constant change, a simple and sublime religious consciousness, a sense of spiritual nearness to the great elemental forces of nature, were among their most striking characteristics. Their domestic system was patriarchal; their political system, so far as they had one, was patriarchal too. As among the Celtic clans of the Scottish Highlands, the head of the family was the supreme judge in peace, and leader in war. No better picture of such a mode of existence was ever painted than that given in the middle chapters of the book of Genesis.

How did these early Semites regard the great civilisation of Mongol origin which they saw established in Chaldæa? Probably with a mingled feeling of wonder and aversion. They, the

wanderers of the desert, whose only possessions were their cattle and their tents, must have gazed in astonishment at the enclosed cities, the careful cultivation of the soil, the complicated system of irrigation-canals, the temples to the gods, the statues of kings and deities, the political order, the reign of law, the elaborate ritual of worship, the commercial activity, the manual skill, which characterised the settled population. And perhaps nothing impressed them more than the written language of the Shumerians and Akkadians. Here were men who could speak without sounds, and converse with each other at a distance, nay, among whom the words of departed kings could still be heard, and the incantations of long dead magicians preserved for ages without the loss of a syllable.

But while the pastoral Semite felt the wonder of these achievements of an alien race, they had little attraction for him. He was like the Bedouin of to-day in presence of the French civilisation of Algeria. His untamed spirit resented the thought of a fixed home within the walls of a city. To become an artisan or a shopkeeper would have been a degradation to his pride.

Such were, doubtless, the feelings of the majority, at the first. But things could not remain always and universally so. Some men of Semitic race at a very early time conceived a desire to join in, and profit by, the results of the settled civilisation of Chaldæa. By what steps they achieved their end, we can only guess. Perhaps

the means used were mostly peaceful, perhaps mostly warlike, probably a combination into which both entered largely. It seems likely, too, that many Semitic tribes had passed out of the primitive nomadic stage, and had also become deeply affected by the culture of the Shumero-Akkads, long before the time when they made any serious invasion of Chaldæa with the object of conquest and domination. It is impossible to believe that the Shumerian civilisation had not exerted a powerful and permanent influence on peoples far beyond its own borders.

Of this, at all events, we have abundant proof, that it was in northern Chaldæa, or Akkad, that the Semites first made their presence felt; and, indeed, long after Akkad had become largely "Semitised," the southern division, or Shumer, showed few signs of the foreign influence.

The Shumerian cities, even as late as the time of Abraham, for instance, cannot have contained an overwhelming Semitic element in the population, for the inscriptions of Eri-Aku and Kudur-mabuk (such as those we have read) are all in the old Shumerian language — not one is in Semitic Babylonian.

It is true that while some of the inscriptions of Khammurabi, a contemporary of these kings, are in Shumerian, others are in Semitic, and others, again, are published in both languages, the ruler evidently desiring to make himself intelligible to both sections of his people, just as on a Swiss bank-note we may see both French and German,

and on an Austrian note German and Hungarian. But the explanation is simple. Khammurabi was a king of Babylon, a city which lay considerably to the north of Shumer, and was often reckoned to belong to Akkad.

Thus we are probably right in thinking of the townsfolk of Ur in Abraham's days as mostly men and women with yellow skins, black, wiry hair, and a Mongol type of countenance, rather than as people distinguished by the curved noses and general Semitic appearance which we are accustomed to associate with Arabs, Jews, and Assyrians. And it is this which makes it far from unlikely that Terah and his family were not so much townspeople of Ur of the Chaldees as part of a pastoral population dwelling in the vicinity of the city. But we can arrive at no certainty on the subject.

That there was a Semitic element of importance in many of the Shumerian cities in Abraham's time, is proved by the numerous contract-tablets that have been found in various parts of the country dating from that age; and that there were Semites in Ur even centuries earlier still may be concluded from the fact that one inscription—and only one—of King Dungi is in the Semitic tongue. This is on a stone tablet, and but for its discovery we might have rashly drawn the conclusion that no Semites dwelt at Ur in the time of Dungi. It stands out, like the discovery of certain fossils in strata where they were least expected as a solemn warning against

hastily drawing inferences from merely negative evidence.

But how different, we repeat, was the case in Akkad! The Semites there not only blended in very ancient times with the earlier population, but at a marvellously remote date established a powerful Semitic dynasty in one of the principal cities. This city was called Agade, a name bearing so close a resemblance to that of the whole country, Akkad, that we are probably right in regarding the latter as derived from it.

Ages and ages before the time of Abraham, there reigned at Agade a Semitic king named Sargon, more correctly Shargani. We must, of course, be careful not to confound him with the Assyrian king Sargon, whose name occurs in Isaiah (xx. 1), who lived only about seven centuries before Christ, and of whom something will be said in the next chapter ("Asshur and Israel").

This earlier Sargon of Agade, then, was a Semite. It is true that in later times an atmosphere of myth and legend gathered about him, yet there can be no doubt that he was a real historical personage, and founded a great empire. At the British Museum there is an egg-shaped piece of veined marble bearing his name and titles, in beautifully clear characters, and a statement that he had dedicated this object to the Sun-god of Sippar. The egg is pierced with a hole from end to end, and seems likely to have been the ornamental head of a staff or sceptre.

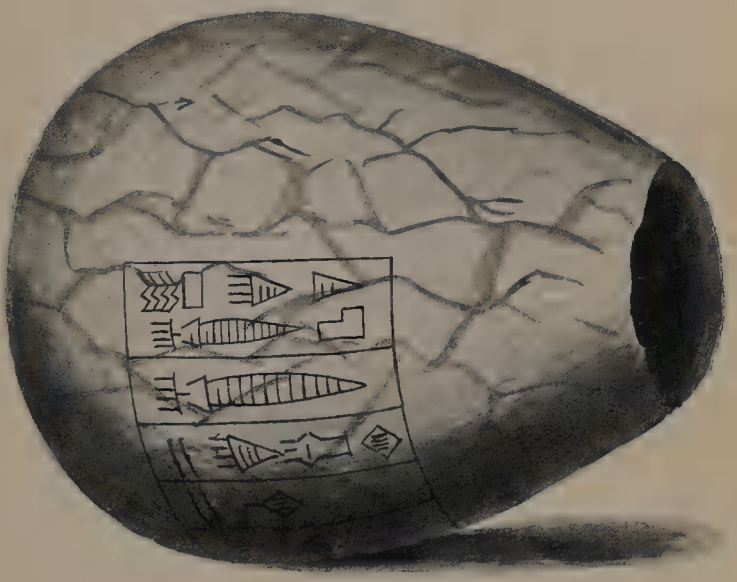

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Fig. 16.—MARBLE EGG OF SARGON OF AGADE.
(*British Museum*)

Three inscribed gate-sockets of hard stone and a number of bricks and brick-stamps of Sargon's have also been found, but as they were discovered by American explorers in Babylonia, these objects are, as they ought to be, now reposing in a trans-atlantic museum.

Should we like to know the date of this early king of Akkad? If so, the indefatigable Nabû-nahid will again come to our assistance.

That zealous archæologist did not confine his researches to southern Chaldæa, but worked with equal energy and success in disinterring memorial-stones in the northern division of the country.

At Sippar, a town close to Agade, stood the great temple of the Sun-god, and in the days of Nabû-nahid it was well known that this temple had been *originally* built by Narâm-Sin, the son of that very Sargon whose date we are discussing. The temple that existed in the time of Nabû-nahid was, however, quite modern. He tells us that it had been erected by Nebuchadnezzar, who had sought, but had been unable to find, the original foundation-stone. The new temple built by Nebuchadnezzar cannot have been a very durable structure, for, says Nabû-nahid, "in forty-five years its walls had fallen to decay." Then he tells us that he brought out the statue of the god, pulled the dilapidated temple down, and sought the ancient foundation-stone. "I dug down," he says, "eighteen yards deep," and there "the Sun-god, the great lord of the temple, which was the

dwelling of his heart's delight, revealed to me the foundation-stone of Narâm-Sin, the son of Sargon, which no king who came before me had seen for *three thousand two hundred years.*" He then relates how he built a new and glorious temple on the old site, commencing upon Narâm-Sin's inscribed stone, which he anointed with oil, and "not departing from it inwards or outwards by a single inch."

And now to the chronological point. Nabû-nahid gives three thousand two hundred years as the interval of time between Narâm-Sin and himself. There is nothing wildly immoderate about this statement, its very definiteness seems to suggest a basis of fact, and most Assyriologists are of opinion that it is trustworthy. Nabû-nahid, writes Professor Sayce, was "a king who was curious about the past history of his country, and whose royal position gave him the best possible opportunities for learning all that could be known about it." We know, too, from tablets discovered, that the Babylonians for ages kept carefully drawn up lists of their royal dynasties, giving, not only the name, but the length of reign of each of their kings, as well as the duration of the successive dynasties. We are, therefore, probably right in assuming that Nabû-nahid knew the truth on the matter referred to; and if so, we have only to add 3200 to the date of the late Babylonian king—viz. about 550 B.C., and the result gives us, as the date of Narâm-Sin, the stupendously high figure of B.C. 3750.

Sargon, the father, must, of course, have lived somewhat earlier still—*i.e.* at nearly B.C. 3800. Compared with these remote times, even Abraham begins to look a little modern.

We have already seen that certain inscribed objects of Sargon's have been discovered among the ruined cities of Babylonia. Being strictly contemporaneous, the inscriptions upon these are of immense historical value. They are, however, for the most part brief and bald. But a lengthy record, purporting to give, in connection with various omens, the annals of his reign in some detail, is also in our possession.

It is true that the tablet in question is but a copy dating from a time far more recent than that of King Sargon. Yet the original, from which this copy was made, was probably of immense antiquity, and may take us back to times not far removed from those of the events referred to. At any rate, fresh discoveries all tend to support, and none go to weaken, the view that the statements of this remarkable omen-tablet are substantially historical.

And what does it tell us? It affirms that Sargon of Agade made important conquests, not only in Babylonia, but far to the east and far to the west of that country, laying his yoke on Syria, and subjugating what he calls "the four quarters of the world." At last, we are told, "he had no rival," he crossed the Mediterranean Sea as far as Cyprus, and "in the third year, by the setting sun, his hand

conquered the land, and his mouth decreed a single empire." Here, in the far "west, he set up images of himself, and carried away the booty" of the island "over land and sea."

This extraordinary record of success perhaps derives confirmation from a discovery made in Cyprus. In the treasure-vaults of a Cyprian temple, General de Cesnola came upon several early Babylonian cylinders, and on one of them the owner calls himself a servant of the "Deified Narâm-Sin," who, we remember, was the son of Sargon.

Unfortunately, we do not know the date of this cylinder, and Dr Hilprecht believes it to be no older than B.C. 1500 or 2000. But, to say the least, its discovery in Cyprus harmonises in a striking manner with the narrative of Sargon's surprising conquests in the West.

Historic heroes are wont to gather myths and legends about their memories; and so it was with King Sargon. He became, like Charlemagne, King Arthur, and Robin Hood, a favourite figure in the popular imagination. One of these legends—a piece of folk-lore, no doubt, in origin—is so pretty and interesting, that we may well rejoice that a part of it is preserved for us on an Assyrian clay-tablet. It runs thus:

"Sargon, the mighty King, the King of Agade, am I.
My mother was a princess, my father I knew not, my father's brother dwelt in the mountain.

My city is Azupiranu, which is situated on the bank of the Euphrates.
My mother, the princess, conceived me, and in a secret place she gave me birth.
She placed me in a basket (or box) of reeds (?), and closed my exit with bitumen ;
She cast me into the river, which overwhelmed me not.
The river bore me along ; to Akki, the irrigator, it brought me ;
Akki, the irrigator, in the goodness of his heart (?) took me up ;
Akki, the irrigator, reared me to boyhood ;
Akki, the irrigator, made me his gardener,
And in my gardenership the goddess Ishtar loved me."

And so on.

It is scarcely possible to read this little legend without being reminded of the story of Perseus, set afloat on the sea in a boat with his mother Danaë ; of Romulus and Remus sent adrift in a little box on the Tiber ; and of Moses placed in the Nile in his ark of bulrushes. Are the resemblances purely accidental ? or do some, at least, of these later stories owe their origin, or certain of their features, to the legend of Sargon ? We can offer no reply. But it is interesting to note the lines :

" She cast me into the river, which overwhelmed me not.
The river bore me along ; to Akki, the irrigator, it brought me,"

and to observe how wonderfully they resemble the lines regarding Romulus and Remus in " The Prophecy of Capys," by Lord Macaulay, who,

however, had certainly never heard of Sargon of Agade:

> "The troubled river knew them,
> And smoothed his yellow foam,
> And gently rocked the cradle
> That bore the fate of Rome."

We, too, will now embark upon the Euphrates, and descend its current till we again find ourselves at Ur of the Chaldees.

Arrived at our destination, we may spend a few moments upon the religion of Abraham's native city.

At all periods of its history known to us, Ur was the great seat of the worship of the Moon-god. Indeed, one of the most frequent names of this divinity was "the god of Ur."

It may, perhaps, strike us as strange, and scarcely natural, that the divinity of the moon should be masculine; for we are so accustomed to think of the luminary of the night as feminine, to personify her as "pale Luna," the "queen of night," and so on, that we can with difficulty bring ourselves to accept the opposite conception. To the Greeks and Romans, also, the moon was always feminine, and there is little doubt that, had the Semites originated the religious ideas of Chaldæa, she would have been feminine there too. For, to the Semite, all nature seemed, as it were, to pair off matrimonially. His very language marked gender, not only in its nouns and adjectives, but in its verbs too. A male divinity without his corresponding female, appeared to him almost as impossible as

a single *scissor*, *trouser*, or *tong*. Not that he placed the lady on an equality with her lord and master. No, indeed! The patriarchal feeling was far too strong to admit of anything like that. But every god must be provided with a fitting consort, to sit by her lord's side, and be a pale reflex, or colourless counterpart, of his own mighty self.

Now, the supreme Semitic divinity was always the Sun-god. We cannot, therefore, doubt that among the Semites the moon would have symbolised the wife of this god, and therefore would have been a female divinity.

Nor is this mere conjecture. If we travel away from Mesopotamia in a westward direction, we find that among such Semitic peoples as the Canaanites and Phœnicians, the consort of Baal, the Sun-god, was, in fact, symbolised by the moon. Her name there was Ashtoreth, and sometimes "Ashtoreth of the double horn," which at once connects her with the moon. But what is this name Ashtoreth? It is nothing but the name of the old Shumerian goddess Ishtar, who, in wandering away from Chaldæa, has become the Moon-goddess (which she never was in Chaldæa), and who has received on the journey what we may call a Semitic wedding present, in the form of a feminine suffix (-eth) to her name.

Hence it was inevitable that, in the Phœnician cities of Tyre and Sidon, Astarte (or Ashtoreth) should be the goddess of the moon, for this western land was so far removed from Shumerian influence

that the Moon-*god* had failed to establish himself there, and therefore his place was filled, in the manner natural to Semitic peoples, by a goddess.

The case, however, was altogether different in Babylonia and Assyria, where Semitic ideas, potent as they became, and profoundly as they affected the whole subsequent history of the land, were never able to expel and supersede the earlier Shumerian thought. We cannot, perhaps, easily explain why these Mongol inhabitants of Chaldæa had made the divinity of the moon a god, nay even the father of the Sun-god and of the goddess of the evening star. Yet such was undoubtedly the fact, and so it remained to the end. Even the last native king of Babylon, Nabû-nahid, says in one of his prayers, "May the Sun-god, and Ishtar, the bright offspring of his heart, speak of blessing to the Moon-god, the father who begat them!"

Possibly the original thought, underlying the notion that the divinity of the sun sprang from the divinity of the moon, was that day seems to develop from night, rather than night from day. Or, possibly again, historical causes had something to do with these divine genealogies. For, in the earlier times, the cities of Chaldæa, like the great cities of Italy in the Middle Ages, were independent communities. They no more formed a political unity than Venice, Florence, and Genoa did in the days of Dante or Machiavelli. Each city of Shumer and Akkad had its own tutelary deity or deities. Thus, the special

god of Ur was the Moon-god, that of Larsa the Sun-god, and so on. If, then, in the course of conflict, or even by peaceful means, one of these cities came to occupy the position of political superior to another, this fact might lead to, and find its counterpart in, the god of the former becoming father of the god of the latter. Thus the local origin of the various Chaldæan cults, and the leading events of the country's earliest history, may be the true explanation of some of the complicated and puzzling relationships which we find among the gods and goddesses of the later pantheon.

In the German language it is noticeable that the word for "sun" is feminine, and that for "moon" masculine, and this is accounted for, if not fully explained, by the mythological conceptions of the olden time.

We know little concerning the ceremonies with which the Moon-god of Ur was worshipped at the time of Abraham. But we observe that great importance was always attached to this divinity in connection with omens and prognostications; and a fine hymn addressed to him has been preserved for us in a copy made by one of Asshurbanipal's scribes or librarians. This hymn is given, on the Assyrian tablet, in two languages (Akkadian and Semitic), and is doubtless so ancient that it may well have been chanted in the temple of the Moon-God at Ur in the days, and possibly in the hearing, of the patriarch.

It compares the divinity to a powerful bullock, with mighty horns and perfect limbs. It speaks of him as the opener of the doors of the sky, the wide-hearted, the long-suffering and merciful father, the begetter of the universe:

"As for thee, thy word is mentioned in heaven, and the angels bow their faces.
As for thee, thy word is mentioned upon earth, and the spirits below kiss the ground.
. . . . . .
As for thee, who can learn thy word, who can equal it?
O lord, in heaven is thy lordship, in the earth is thy sovereignty; among the gods, thy brethren, thou hast no rival."

There is one interesting little fact in regard to the worship of the Moon-god at Ur, which bears upon the story of Abraham. We recollect that, when Terah and his family quitted their old home at Ur of the Chaldees, the place to which they first migrated was Haran. It has been ascertained, as a result of cuneiform research, that this city Haran was, like Ur, a famous seat of the Moon-god's worship. Far away as it lay to the north-west, its name often occurs in the early Babylonian texts, which proves that there was a very real connection between it and the cities of the south. Its temple of the Moon-god rivalled that at Ur, and was extremely ancient. Nabû-nahid speaks of it as "the temple . . . in Haran, in which, from time immemorial, the Moon-god, the mighty lord, had placed the seat of the goodness of his heart." The word Haran,

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Fig. 17.—STATUE OF GUDEA, FROM TELL-LOH. (*British Museum*)

[*N. B.*—On the plate, the signs of the inscription have no individual accuracy.]

which seems to be of Akkadian origin, means "road," and was probably used to denote the city Haran because the latter lay on the great highway from Chaldæa to the west.

These facts make it not unlikely that Haran was a colony planted by the early inhabitants of Ur; and if so, we can see a special reason why Abraham and his family should have first settled there. It was the same motive as that which leads Englishmen, when they emigrate, to prefer Canada or Australia to a country inhabited by Frenchmen, Germans, or Italians.

About fifty miles north of Ur of the Chaldees, and a little less distant from Erech in an easterly direction, stands a mound which goes by the modern name of Tell-loh, or Telloh. In this mound, a few years ago, a French explorer, named Monsieur De Sarzec, after years of hard work, made some of the most important and surprising discoveries that have ever been achieved in Chaldæa.

The mound of Tell-loh, which, until the time of De Sarzec's labours, had never been opened in modern days, turns out to contain the ruins of an immense temple or palace of enormous antiquity, and is on the site of a city, the ancient name of which we believe to have been Lagash.

Before this discovery it was the general opinion that, though bas-reliefs and incised slabs were at all times numerous, there were but few statues in Assyria, and none in Babylonia. Here, however,

have come to light no fewer than nine splendid statues, formed of a nearly black stone called diorite or dolerite (which geologists know to be a trap rock), and so hard that the best modern tools can scarcely make any impression upon it.

So wonderful and varied are the monuments of Lagash, that we may well consider them for a moment, since they belong to, and illustrate, the native land of Abraham, though found at some distance from his particular city.

The statues discovered by De Sarzec are now in the Assyrian galleries of the Louvre at Paris; but a few years ago the British Museum received a valuable present from the authorities of the Paris collection, in the shape of a most beautifully executed facsimile of one of the finest of these statues. In colour, surface, and every detail, it is so faithful to the original, that, owing to its intrinsic excellence, and altogether apart from the good feeling shown by the gift, we may congratulate ourselves on having received a most valuable addition to our national treasure-house of the past.

This statue, like all the other eight, is, unfortunately, headless. It is a sitting figure representing, as all these statues do, an ancient ruler of Lagash, named Gudea. It is rather less than of life-size, and shows the king as an architect; for on his lap, as he sits in calm dignity before us, we see the plan of the city which he is building or enlarging, and by the

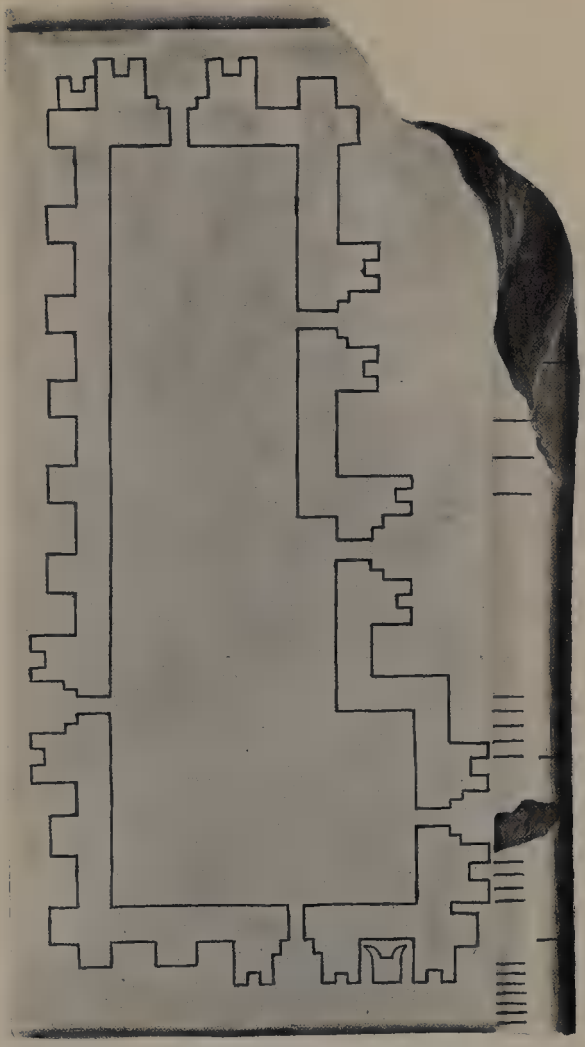

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Fig. 18.—ARCHITECTURAL PLAN ON GUDEA'S LAP.

side of the plan we even observe a scale of measurement.

Professor Sayce asserts that the standard of length employed is not the later Assyro-Babylonian cubit, but identical with the cubit of the Egyptian pyramid-builders, and calls attention to the striking resemblance between the attitude of Gudea's statues and that of King Khephren, of the Fourth Egyptian Dynasty, now in the Museum of Cairo.

These points suggest much interesting inquiry. If we are disposed to consider them as more than accidental coincidences, our opinion is confirmed by the following facts:—(1) that the stone, of which the Egyptian and Chaldæan figures in question are made, is the same; (2) that the quarries of the Sinaitic peninsula are known to have been worked by the Egyptians as early as the dynasty preceding that of Khephren; and (3) that upon Gudea's statues, which are covered with inscriptions, there is a distinct statement that the stone of which they are sculptured was brought from a place which is generally held to be either identical with, or in the direction of, the peninsula of Sinai.

We have seen that all the Lagash statues are headless. But one head was found in a detached state, and in fair preservation. It is shaven as to the face, and turbaned, the pattern of the head-dress being remarkably clear. Very likely it belonged to a statue of Gudea himself. It certainly has not a Semitic appearance, but

much rather resembles the head of a Mongol or Tartar.

Who, we may ask, was Gudea? He reigned, as we have seen, at Lagash, the modern Tell-loh, and we are able to fix his date, at all events relatively to that of a King of Ur of whom mention has already been made—viz. Dungi. Dungi was the son of that early king of Ur named Ur-Gur, who bore rule in Abraham's city several centuries before the patriarch's days. It so happens that a contemporary of Gudea's son mentions Dungi, on an inscription, as a contemporary of his own. Hence we may conclude that Gudea was a little earlier than Dungi—in other words, that he reigned at the same time as the latter's father, Ur-Gur, which was not very far from 3000 B.C.

Gudea was, without doubt, an exceedingly powerful prince. The palace which M. De Sarzec brought to light measures more than a hundred and eighty feet in length, and a hundred in breadth. It was built of square bricks, which generally bear the name of Gudea, cemented together with bitumen, and sometimes with mortar. All along the principal façade there was a pavement, twelve to fifteen feet wide, formed of bricks laid on a bed of bitumen, and at the back of each brick we find the name and title of Gudea.

The statues of this ancient ruler derive a large part of their value from the fact that they are to a great extent covered with inscriptions, and it results from the extreme hardness of the stone

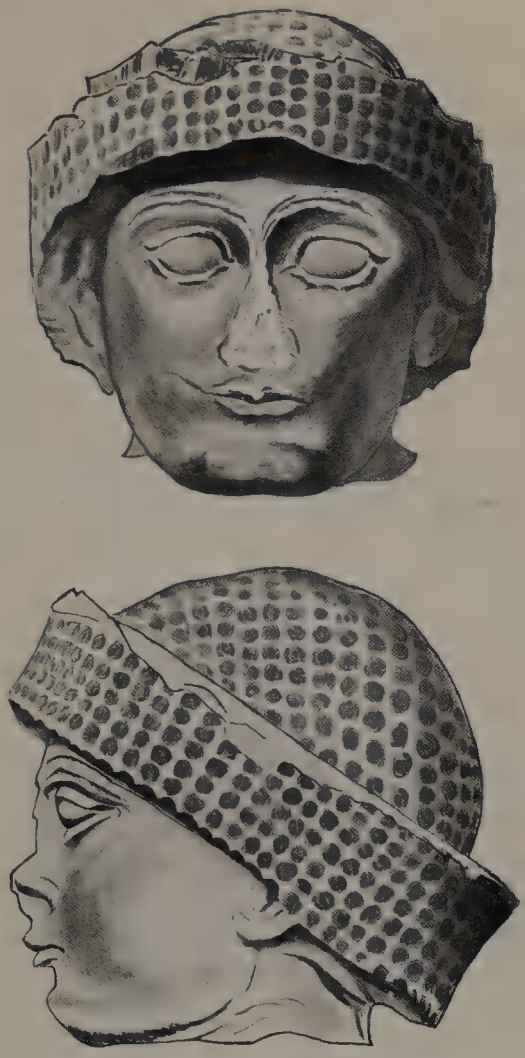

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Fig. 19.—SCULPTURED HEAD (FRONT AND SIDE VIEW) FROM TELL-LOH.

that scarcely a character is less sharp and clear than on the day it was chiselled nearly five thousand years ago. The characters are of so archaic a type as hardly to be cuneiform at all. They show us the signs in a linear stage, intermediate between the original pictorial forms and the later shapes built up of arrow-headed or wedge-like marks.

Another peculiar feature of these inscriptions is that the signs are placed so as to read in vertical, not horizontal, succession—*i.e.* to follow each other downwards, as in Chinese. This arrangement places the characters in what is believed to have been their original position. Yet an examination of the individual signs reveals the fact that in reality the horizontal direction was that usual in Gudea's time, and brings us, therefore, to the conclusion that on these statues they were placed in the vertical order to give an air of extreme antiquity to the inscriptions.

Space does not allow us to enter in any detail upon the contents of these lengthy records of Gudea, which are all in pure Shumerian, and afford no indication that there were at this time any Semites in southern Chaldæa, though, of course, they do not disprove it. But we may glance at two brief extracts from the inscriptions.

The first deals with the material of which the statues are made: "The statue—not of precious metal, nor of mountain-crystal (perhaps lapis-lazuli is meant), nor of copper, nor of tin, nor of

bronze, has anyone made it by my orders. Of dolerite (or diorite) it is!"

The second extract is, perhaps, the earliest reference in the world to a general holiday. It was a sensible holiday too, for it lasted a week. "When I," writes Gudea, "had built E-ninnû, his beloved temple, I relaxed my mind, and washed my hands. For seven days corn was not ground, the maid was the equal of her mistress, the servant walked beside his master, and in my city the strong rested by the side of the weak."

This is a pleasing little picture of life five thousand years ago. We might almost call it a glimpse of old-world socialism; and as we find the announcement of the period of respite from usual conditions closely associated with the completion of a religious act, we seem to see proof that Gudea and the people of his day regarded some brief approach to social equality as not only agreeable to man, but well-pleasing to heaven also.

In all the long inscriptions of Gudea we read scarcely a word about wars or conquests, but much of devotion to the gods and care of his country. Let us hope that the domestic life of this good ruler was as happy as his public deeds were worthy. We know, indeed, little about this; but we possess his cylinder-seal, and on it we find, what we look for in vain in the case of the Semitic rulers of Chaldæa —viz. that along with Gudea's own name he courteously places that of his wife.

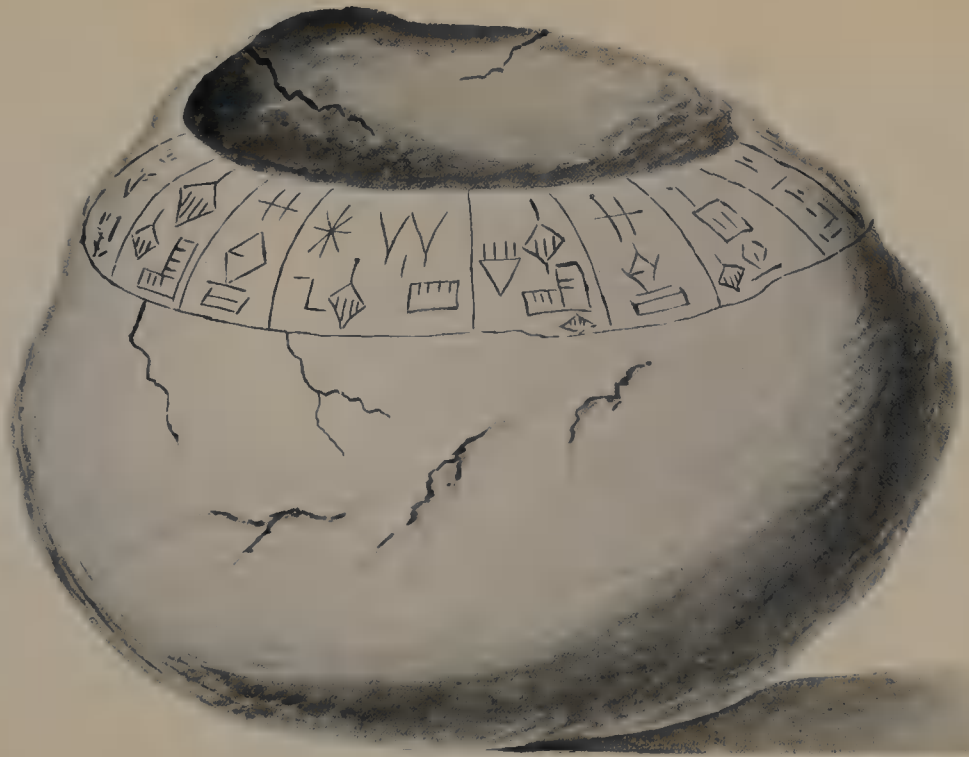

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Fig. 20.—GATE-SOCKET OF EN-TEMENA. (*In the British Museum*)

The monuments of Gudea, though the most important and copious found at Tell-loh, are by no means the only wonders discovered there.

It appears, in fact, that Gudea, ancient as was his date, was, comparatively speaking, quite one of the later rulers of that portion of Chaldæa. A long line of governors and kings preceded him, ruling with a degree of independence which had been to some extent lost in his day.

We have only the most fragmentary records of these remote times—a flash of light here and there, separated by great gaps of darkness. But these momentary glimpses suffice to show us a highly civilised people, living under orderly rule, ages before Gudea. Works of art, of beautiful design and exquisite finish, combine with carefully cut inscriptions to tell the tale of peace and culture. A gate-socket of King En-temena is to be seen at the British Museum, covered with incised characters, and is thought to be as old as 4000 B.C. Yet, according to the notions that prevailed not very long ago, the world was created only four years before this! And what would the advocates of the old-fashioned starveling chronology have made of the earliest known king of Lagash, Uru-ka-gina; to whom a date of about B.C. 4500 is assigned?

Of course such figures do not pretend to be exact; but even if a present is made of a few centuries, we still find Uru-ka-gina at some distance below zero—*i.e.* some centuries before the old date assumed for the beginning of all things.

Yet here was a king who was no savage, but

sufficiently advanced in culture to leave careful inscriptions on various objects for the interest of those who should succeed him.

Truly Abraham's early lot was cast in a land of wonders, where the tide of discovery seems to flow on almost as endlessly as the current of its great Twin Rivers.

PART IV

ASSHUR AND ISRAEL

THE object of the present chapter is to cast a glance at a few of the most striking side-lights thrown upon the ancient history of Israel by recent researches in Assyria.

In this inquiry we must not expect too much. All we can reasonably look for is the demonstration of a few points of contact in the written records of two independent, but contemporary, peoples of antiquity.

The Old Testament is, we know, not a book, but a literature.

The Hebrew race, which stands out in unique and pathetic grandeur among the nations of the earth, attained a high and peculiar civilisation centuries and centuries before Christ, and its great men composed, in prose and poetry, that extraordinary collection of writings which we call the Old Testament.

In stating this we take up no theological position whatever, but simply affirm what no one, be his religious opinions what they may, can question, —viz. that the books exist at this day, and that they are the extremely ancient literature of the Hebrews.

But whilst Israel was working out its destinies in its appointed region of the earth, neighbouring races were also living their own national life, and it was inevitable that they should often come into contact, sometimes, indeed, into violent collision, with the Hebrews.

Every reader of the Bible is familiar with the mention of these neighbouring peoples, some small and comparatively insignificant, others great, impressive, and terrible. None are spoken of with more awe than the Assyrians, and whilst but few details of their history are mentioned, some of their most striking features are alluded to with great power and accuracy, and their final downfall supplied the later Hebrew prophets with a theme for some of their highest flights of poetry.

If we look for a moment at a map of this part of western Asia, we are apt to exclaim, How large was Asshur, how small was Israel!

To the little land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea the vast country of Assyria might well look terrible from its size alone.

But Assyria was not merely large. She was on fire with the lust of conquest. Like Rome in later days, she stretched out greedy hands to land after land, and every fresh acquisition added to her ardour and her power for further aggression. Well was Asshur known to Israel, and well might we expect to find, as indeed we do, many a mention of Asshur in both the historical and poetical literature of the Hebrews.

But Israel to Asshur. That was quite a different thing.

To the great lords of Nineveh and Calah the little land of Israel might seem scarcely worthy of attention. What should the kings of the whole basin of the Tigris and Euphrates want with the petty coast-land far away towards the setting sun? Had they not all the mountains of Armenia to subdue, the "distant Medes" and Elamites to conquer, and, above all, Chaldæa and the proud mother-city, Babylon, to humble and dominate?

But the homely adage tells us that "Enough is a little more than a man has"; and as with individuals, so is it with nations. While there remained one unconquered spot in the wide reach of her view, Assyria could never rest satisfied. And a special fact must be remembered. The great rival of Assyria was Egypt, and to reach Egypt, the road ran right through Phœnicia and Palestine. Poor little Palestine, therefore, had sometimes to play the part of a buffer state, or, to put it somewhat differently, she often had to experience the proverbially agreeable sensation of lying between the hammer and the anvil.

Still, Israel was but one, and a comparatively unimportant one, of Asshur's many neighbours. We must not, therefore, expect to hear much about the Hebrew land in the inscriptions of Assyria. It would be vain to look for any account of the domestic polity, laws, traditions, institutions, and religion of Israel. A few broad outside facts,

a few well-known names of men and places, such as a foreigner would be likely to hear of, these are all that we have any right to expect to find mentioned.

Nor must we look for absolute accuracy even in these. How little intercourse existed in those early days between nation and nation, and what a sovereign contempt most ancient peoples felt for everything foreign! The one motive of the inscriptions of Assyrian kings seems to have been self-glorification. Whatever did not conduce to this was esteemed of little value; whatever opposed it was rigorously excluded.

Even in our own days of free and constant intercommunication between country and country, when international exhibitions are the most ordinary sights, and cheap continental tours are within the power of the slenderest purses, when foreign telegrams fill columns of our newspapers, and "Paris Day by Day" is on every breakfast table, even in these enlightened times what blunders are often made about things foreign!

A few years ago a very respectable daily paper in the south of France used frequently to give reports of speeches by "Mr Hartington" and "Lord Gladstone." We must not, therefore, be too particular with King Shalmaneser and King Sennacherib, or expect them to know more about Jehu and Hezekiah than the "Petit Marseillais" knew about our English statesmen.

And with regard to our religious affairs. There are foreigners—and intelligent, well-educated ones

too — whose whole notion with regard to the numberless sects and endless diversities of opinion on religious matters which exist in this country, amounts to this: that there are in England two churches, the High and the Low, the former being the Established Church to which the Queen belongs, and the latter embracing all the Nonconformists.

Let us now take our first illustration.

In one of the great Assyrian rooms of the British Museum there is a large inscribed stone, prominently placed, shaped something like a flat upright tombstone with a rounded top, and generally called the Monolith of Shalmaneser the Second. It was found at a place called Karch on the right bank of the Tigris, and dates from the time of an Assyrian king named Shalmaneser, who reigned from B.C. 860 to 825.

We are thus taken back to the ninth century before Christ.

If we turn to the First Book of Kings in our Bibles, we shall find that long before this the separation had taken place between Israel and Judah, and that, whereas Judah had continued to be ruled over in comparative peace by the descendants of David, the northern kingdom, Israel, had had a more troublous history. Two revolutions had taken place in the latter country, and at the time to which we are referring, the crown was on the head of Ahab, the son of Omri.

Between Ahab and Benhadad, the Syrian King of Damascus, a fierce and sanguinary war was waged, of which we have an account in 1 Kings xx. In the last battle Israel gained a decisive victory, and Benhadad was taken prisoner. But we are astonished to find that Ahab now shows a most unusual spirit of forgiveness. He calls his captive foe his "brother," makes a covenant with him, and lets him go scot-free. And for "three years," we are told, "they continued without war between Syria and Israel." What does this mean? The Bible gives us no explanation, and suggests no motive whatever.

Now let us turn to the Monolith of Shalmaneser, the Assyrian king; and we at once find the key to the whole puzzle.

Shalmaneser II. was one of the most warlike of the monarchs of Assyria, and he tells us that in his sixth campaign he made an invasion of Lower Syria. The petty kings of this neighbourhood, having had full warning of the impending blow, organised a great defensive coalition to resist it. Twelve of them sent contingents in accordance with their resources — Shalmaneser gives us the names of all the twelve, or rather he intends to, but by mistake gives only eleven —and at the head of the confederacy stood three, viz. the King of Hamath, Dad-idri (or Hadadezer) of Damascus (*i.e.* the Benhadad to whom we have just referred), and Akhabbu the Israelite (*i.e.* King Ahab of Israel).

The common danger, then, had reconciled the

quondam foes, and, indeed, so incongruous were the elements thus united, that nothing short of imminent peril menacing them all could have induced them to forget their long-standing feuds.

Let us now read a few lines from the story as given by Shalmaneser on the stone in the British Museum:

"From the Euphrates I set out, and drew nigh to Khalman (the modern Aleppo). They feared my battle, and embraced my feet, and I received silver and gold from them as tribute. . . . From Khalman I departed, and drew nigh to the cities of Irkhulini of Hamath. . . . Arganâ, his capital, I captured; his spoil, his goods, and the possessions of his palaces I brought out, and I set fire to his palaces. From Arganâ I departed, and drew nigh to Karkara. Karkara, his royal city (or capital), I laid waste, I destroyed, I burnt with fire. Twelve hundred chariots, twelve hundred war-horses, twenty thousand troops of Hadadezer of Damascus; seven hundred chariots, seven hundred war-horses, ten thousand troops of Irkhulini of Hamath; two thousand chariots, ten thousand troops of Ahab of Israel, etc. etc. etc., . . . these twelve kings he had drawn to his assistance, and they advanced to engage in battle with me. With the sublime power given me by Asshur my lord, and with the mighty weapons bestowed on me by Nergal, who walks before me, I fought with them, and I discomfited them from Karkara to Gilzau. Fourteen thousand of their warriors I laid low with my arms; like the Storm-god I

rained tempest upon them . . ., with their corpses I covered the surface of the plain."

We cannot call this a very modest account, nor does it suggest much compassionate regret for the suffering and slaughter inflicted by the Assyrian king upon his (apparently innocent) fellow-creatures.

But the historical value of the inscription is great. Not only does it confirm the Biblical narrative by giving us the names of Benhadad and Ahab of Israel, but it perfectly fills in the gap in the Book of Kings, and thoroughly explains what there seems so unaccountable.

The venerable stone in the British Museum was, doubtless, inscribed and set up at the very time of the events which it relates. No copyist has had an opportunity of misunderstanding or garbling the text. It is an original and contemporary document, and upon it stand familiar names with which every reader of the Bible is acquainted.

It is noticeable that King Ahab is called on the Monolith "Akhabbu Sirhlâi"—*i.e.* "Ahab the Israelite," and this is the only cuneiform inscription known in which the name Israel occurs. The country and people are, indeed, often referred to elsewhere by the Assyrians, but by other names, as we shall see directly.

If we now turn our backs to Shalmaneser's Monolith, as it stands in the British Museum, we

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Fig. 21.—THE BLACK OBELISK OF SHALMANESER II. (*British Museum*)

shall see facing us, at a distance of only a few feet, a curious black stone, usually called, from its shape and colour, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser. This stone, as its name indicates, was erected by the same old warrior-monarch as the one we have just been considering. It was found by Layard in the ruins of his palace; but, owing to the greater hardness of its material, is in a far better state of preservation. So little, indeed, has time wrought upon it that now, after twenty-seven centuries have rolled by, the inscriptions and other marks which it bears are almost as sharp as though the chisel of the engraver had completed them but yesterday. A few trifling chippings at some of the corners are the only injuries which it has sustained. Yet this stone is as much older than the time of Christ as the Norman Conquest is anterior to our own day. It presents, too, the additional interest of bearing on its four faces, not only a long inscription, but drawings in bas-relief, representing some of the matters referred to in the inscribed narrative.

And now we ask, How does this remarkable monument bear upon our subject?

When we come to decipher the inscription, most of which is very simple, we find that it is a brief and condensed record of the first thirty-one military campaigns of King Shalmaneser's reign; and as he only reigned, in all, thirty-five years, it is evident that we have on the Black Obelisk an outline of nearly the whole period during which this monarch occupied the throne of Assyria.

The narrative, it must be admitted, is extremely bald and monotonous, but it gives us an appalling idea of the incessant warfare of the period.

"In my first year . . . , in my second year . . . , in my third year . . . "

So that I must, poor king, have worked the unceasing treadmill with machine-like regularity, and as sure as each succeeding spring visited the land throughout my long reign, I was bound to set forth to the appointed and inevitable task.

Still, there can be no doubt that war was quite to the taste of King Shalmaneser; and not till the few last campaigns, when the feebleness of advancing age rendered it impossible for him to take the field in person, do we find him remaining at home in his capital, and committing the conduct of the war to his trusty generals.

As we read through the lengthy inscription on this Obelisk, we find that, at the sixth year, the war with the confederate princes of Syria, to which we have just referred, is briefly related (though this time without mention of Ahab by name), and that in the eleventh year Shalmaneser was fighting them again. Ahab, indeed, was now dead, but Benhadad was still in the forefront, and although the Assyrian king again claims a victory, it cannot have been a decisive one, even if victory it was at all. For in the fourteenth year, as an inscription on a colossal winged bull tells us, the confederacy is still holding up its head, and, under brave old Benhadad, still offering vigorous resistance.

And now we come to the eighteenth year, and

find that Damascus is no longer ruled over by Benhadad, but that a man named Khazailu is its king. Do we know anything about this Khazailu? The Bible here supplies the information which the cuneiform narrative omits; for Khazailu is that very Hazael mentioned in 2 Kings viii., and who, we are told in verse 15 of that chapter, dipped a coverlet in water, spread it on the face of his master Benhadad, and, having thus killed the aged king, "reigned in his stead."

But further. On another monument of Shalmaneser's we read that immediately after overthrowing this usurper Hazael, the Assyrian king marched to the sea-coast, received the submission and tribute of Tyre and Sidon, and also of "Yahua, the son of Khumri"—*i.e.* the well-known Jehu, king of Israel.

And now we turn again to the Black Obelisk, and casting our eyes over the bas-reliefs which adorn its four faces, we find that above each row of human and animal figures represented there is a brief inscription, or epigraph, running thus: The tribute of so-and-so, of the land of so-and-so, with an enumeration of the several objects brought as offerings to the Assyrian king. In the second of these epigraphs we read the words: "The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri; bars of silver, bars of gold, a golden bowl, a golden ladle, golden goblets, golden pitchers, bars of tin, a staff for the king's hand, and spear-shafts I received from him."

With regard to the particular objects of tribute named, considerable doubt surrounds the inter-

pretation of some of the Assyrian words, but the general sense of the epigraph is quite clear. Beneath it we see the long line of tribute-bearers, with Jewish faces, advancing with their loads; and there, in front of the Assyrian king, behind whom stands the royal parasol-bearer, and beneath the sacred symbol of Asshur, a figure kneels, and kisses the ground in abject submission.

In this abased suppliant we probably see a representation of King Jehu himself.

How wonderful this is! Had we been told sixty years ago that the world would shortly be gazing on a portrait of one of the ancient kings of Israel, the prophecy would have seemed an idle dream. But truth is often stranger than fiction, and Jehu owes it to his bitterest foes, that, two thousand seven hundred years after his death, mankind still possesses his effigy.

The circumstances under which his likeness was taken were not, indeed, so glorious that the king of Israel would have cared to see the memory of them perpetuated. Perhaps it is for this reason that no account of the occurrence is to be found in the Hebrew record, at all events as it has come down to our time.

One more fact in connection with the inscription is remarkable. We notice that Jehu is called "Jehu, son of Omri." This he certainly was not. And not only was he not son of Omri, as Ahab was, but he was an adventurous captain, who had obtained the crown by a revolution, having put to death the whole family of Ahab after that king's

Fig. 22.—BAS-RELIEFS ON ONE FACE OF THE BLACK OBELISK.

death. How, then, are we to explain the fact that the exterminator of Omri's house is called "son of Omri"? Probably in this way. The Assyrians knew and cared little about the internal affairs of Israel. But since Omri had, some years before, founded a dynasty, and even built the city of Samaria (as we learn from 1 Kings xvi. 24), he impressed himself so strongly on the minds of the Assyrians, that the land of Israel—*i.e.* the northern kingdom—remained to the end the "House of Omri," and all subsequent kings of Israel, in spite of changes of dynasty, were, to the Assyrians, "sons of Omri."

SYNCHRONISM OF THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL, JUDAH, AND ASSYRIA

Israel.	*Judah.*	*Assyria.*
Ahab.		Shalmaneser II. (B.C. 860-825).
Jehu.		
		5 other Kings.
		Tiglath-pileser III.
	Azariah.	(B.C. 745-727).
Menahem.		
Pekah.	Ahaz.	
Hoshea.		
		Shalmaneser IV. (B.C. 727-722).
		Sargon. (B.C. 722-705).
	Hezekiah.	Sennacherib. (B.C. 705-681).
		Esarhaddon. (B.C. 681-668).
	Manasseh.	
		Asshurbanipal. (B.C. 668-626).

And now let us leave old Shalmaneser and his exploits, and descend eighty years down the stream of time.

Much has happened during this period both in Asshur and Israel.

In Assyria five kings have followed Shalmaneser in succession, and the reign of the last of the five has ended in revolution and a change of dynasty.

We need not trouble ourselves with the details of this matter, about which, indeed, very little is known. From the records which remain, however, it is clear that the dynasty which had lasted for perhaps about a thousand years was overturned, and a usurper seated himself upon the ancient throne of Asshur.

This usurper was the famous Tiglath-pileser III., who reigned from B.C. 745 to 727. If we turn to 2 Kings xv., we shall find this king mentioned three times, once by the name just given (Tiglath-pileser), and twice by the name Pul.

This word Pul was long a puzzle to students, for no Assyrian king of that name could be found in the cuneiform inscriptions. But the mystery is now cleared up. The name Pul has been discovered among the kings of *Babylon* for this particular period, while the Assyrian inscriptions show us that at this precise date Tiglath-pileser conquered and became king of Babylon. Hence there cannot remain a shadow of doubt that Pul and Tiglath-pileser are one and the same man; and the historic accuracy of this chapter of Kings receives a decided confirmation.

Tiglath-pileser III. was, like Shalmaneser II., a great warrior, but he was much besides this. With his accession commenced a new policy; for, from this time onwards, we note a systematic attempt, not simply to conquer, and carry off spoil, but, by consolidating conquests and rendering them permanent, to build up the fabric of a great political empire.

The schemes of Tiglath-pileser led him in the direction of Egypt; thus, interference with the independence of Syria, Phœnicia, and Palestine became a necessity in the execution of his designs.

While Layard was exploring the palace of a later Assyrian king (Esarhaddon) at Nimrud (the site of the ancient Kalah), he found that that monarch, with scant reverence for his predecessor, had used in the building of his own palace a number of marble slabs which had been inscribed and set up, sixty years before, by Tiglath-pileser.

Animated, it would seem, by a remarkable spirit of economy, Esarhaddon caused the old slabs to figure as new ones by turning them about and chiselling away the earlier inscriptions. Fortunately for us, however, the effacement of the older writing was but incompletely done, and, as a consequence, we are to-day able to read in the British Museum the words, several times repeated, "Az-ri-ya-a-u mât Ya-u-di"—*i.e.* Azariah of the land of Judah. This king is the Azariah of 2 Kings xv. who is also called Uzziah in Chronicles and Isaiah.

The above inscription is the earliest, but by

no means the only one in which the name of Judah, or the southern Hebrew kingdom, occurs in the records of Assyria. From it we learn that King Azariah was among those whom Tiglath-pileser laid under tribute.

If we turn to 2 Kings xv. we shall find that while Azariah was reigning over Judah, the crown of Israel passed to Menahem by the not infrequent method of the assassination of the reigning monarch. In verse 19 we read: "Pul the king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand."

Now, we have already seen that Pul was Tiglath-pileser; thus, the usurper of the throne of Israel purchases the aid of the usurper of Assyria against his own subjects. Such, at least, is the Biblical statement, and its confirmation is to be found on another slab of Tiglath-pileser's, also at the British Museum, where we read: "The tribute of Ratsunnu of Damascus and Menikhimme (*i.e.* Menahem) of Samaria." Ratsunnu of Damascus is the Rezin several times mentioned in 2 Kings xvi.

Without entering into details which might prove wearisome, it may be added that the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser inform us that Azariah's grandson, Ahaz, also paid him tribute, as 2 Kings xvi. 8 states that he did.

We read, moreover, in 2 Kings xv. (to return for a moment to the northern kingdom, Israel), that Menahem's son, Pekahiah, was assassinated by a certain captain of his, named Pekah, and that the latter succeeded to the throne, but that Tiglath-pileser came up against him and took away much of his territory. After which we are told that "Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him and slew him, and reigned in his stead."

This, too, is quite in accordance with the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser, save that the Assyrian king claims a rather more important share in the transaction than we should gather to have been his from the narrative in 2 Kings. For he says: "Pekah, their king, they overthrew, and Hoshea *I* set up over them." But the discrepancy almost vanishes in the light of the words which follow in the Assyrian inscription: "Ten talents of gold and . . . talents of silver I received as a gift"; for if this offering was, as in Menahem's case, the price paid for the Assyrian king's support, and if, therefore, the Israelitish usurper was in reality propped up by the arms of Tiglath-pileser, the latter might say with little exaggeration, "*I* set him up over them."

And now we will pass to quite another part of the history of Israel and Assyria, and direct our attention to a verse in the prophecies of Isaiah.

In chapter xx. 1, 2, we read: "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod (when Sargon, the king of Assyria, sent him) and fought against Ashdod, and took it; At the same time spake the Lord, etc."

Here, then, we have mention of another Assyrian monarch—viz. Sargon, and a glance at the Table of Kings (on p. 181) will show that he was the next but one after Tiglath-pileser.

It is remarkable that nowhere else in the whole Bible is king Sargon named—a fact that will seem all the more surprising when we come to consider how mighty and influential a sovereign he was. But this is not nearly all; for, not only is Sargon mentioned in no other verse in the Bible than this, but no other ancient writer has preserved for us the slightest memory of him. Neither Greek nor Roman, Persian nor Arab, ever refers to this mighty monarch. Save for the passing and parenthetical notice of him in Isaiah, the world for twenty or more centuries would have been utterly unaware that he had ever existed.

Had, then, a hostile critic chosen to affirm that the name of Sargon and the incident referred to were entirely imaginary, it would have been, till recently, difficult to confute him. But the discoveries in Assyria have entirely altered the state of the case. Not only do we find abundant proof that a king named Sargon existed at this time, but we can still gaze upon the wonderful remains he left behind him in Assyria, and we can read among his records an account of

the very episode referred to by the prophet Isaiah.

Let us now examine the verse more closely. "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod." Who was Tartan? We might at first be disposed to regard this as a proper name, like Sargon and Sennacherib. But the knowledge we now possess of Assyrian history teaches us the contrary. It would be better to read "the Tartan," or still more correctly, "the Turtan." For the word Turtan is very familiar to all readers of Assyrian records, as meaning "generalissimo" or "commander-in-chief" of the royal forces.

But next about the statement that the Tartan came to Ashdod.

Ashdod, as is well known, was a Philistine city called in later times Azotus. Let us turn to the narrative of King Sargon's reign, as preserved in the cuneiform inscriptions, and we shall before long reach an allusion to the place in question.

Sargon ascended the throne of Assyria in B.C. 722, and reigned till B.C. 705, or seventeen years. His very first act was to bring to a successful issue the siege of Samaria, which had been commenced by his predecessor, Shalmaneser IV. Samaria, we recollect, was the capital of the northern Hebrew kingdom, Israel.

2 Kings xvii. tells us how this Shalmaneser (who is mentioned by name in verse 3) "came up: and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents." It goes on to relate that "the King of Assyria

found conspiracy in Hoshea," and that after casting the King of Israel into prison, he by-and-bye "went up to Samaria and besieged it." But he did not live to complete his work, though from the Bible narrative alone we should probably infer that he did. The conclusion of the siege fell to his successor, Sargon, who, on his side, makes no mention of the part that Shalmaneser had played, and rather seems to claim the whole glory for himself. Thus in the inscriptions of Sargon we read:

"In the beginning of my reign and in my first year . . . I besieged and captured Samaria. Twenty-seven thousand two hundred and ninety of its inhabitants I carried off. Fifty chariots I took for my own royal share. . . . I settled there people from various lands, the captives of my hands. I set my viceroy over them as governor, and laid tribute upon them as upon the Assyrians."

This was the final disaster of the kingdom of Israel, which never regained its independence so long as the Assyrian empire itself existed. Well might Sargon boast (as he does on one of his cylinder-inscriptions) that it was he who had "subjugated the broad land of the House of Omri."

It was not, however, in connection with these events, that Sargon came into collision with Ashdod. Years rolled by after the fall of Samaria, and the Assyrian monarch was fully occupied in many directions.

The West-country and the Mediterranean sea-

board claimed a good deal of his attention. He had a great conflict with Egypt. He waged long and successful wars against the mountaineers of Armenia and Media. And at length, in the eleventh year of his reign (B.C. 711), he ordered that expedition to Palestine which specially concerns us now.

The occasion which called Sargon's army this time (and for the last time) to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea was the revolt of Ashdod.

The people of this Philistine city had risen against the king set over them by Assyria, and had placed on the throne, in his stead, a ruler of their own selection.

To aid them in the revolt, they had drawn some neighbouring states into the conspiracy, and relied in particular on the assistance of Egypt. But let us hear the account of it in Sargon's own words. In one inscription we read:

"The inhabitants of Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab, who dwell by the sea, and who owed tribute and gifts to Asshur my lord; who devised plots, and meditated evil; who, in order to make him my foe, brought gifts of homage to, and sought alliance with, Pharaoh, King of Egypt, a prince who could not save them (how strikingly this reminds us of Isaiah's description of Egypt, 'a people that could not profit them,' and of that 'bruised reed,' upon which the Jews were so solemnly warned not to lean!)—I, Sargon, the rightful prince, who honour the covenant of Nabû and Marduk, and who defend the name of Asshur,

crossed the Tigris and Euphrates in high flood, and ordered the flower of my army to advance with lightning speed."

And again in another place:

"Azuri, King of Ashdod, plotted in his heart to bring no more tribute, and sent to the kings of his neighbourhood a summons to hostility against Assyria.

"In consequence of the evil which he had done, I abolished his rule over the people of his land, and set up his brother (perhaps his twin-brother) Akhimiti as king over them. But some criminally-disposed Hittites bore enmity to his sovereignty, and exalted over them Yamani, who had no right to the throne, and who, like themselves, had no reverence for my majesty. In the wrath of my heart, I assembled not the bulk of my forces, nor summoned my camp; but with my own warriors, who withdraw not from the place whither I direct them, I advanced upon Ashdod.

"Yamani, however, heard from afar of the approach of my army, and fled to the frontier of Egypt on the borders of Melukhkha, and was no more seen.

"Ashdod, Gath, and Ashdudimmu I besieged and took. His gods, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his property and wealth, and the treasure of his palace, together with the people of his land, I counted as spoil. Those cities I peopled afresh, and caused inhabitants of the lands which my hands had captured, and which were situated in the east, to dwell within them. I set

my viceroy over them, and reckoned them with the people of Assyria, and they bore my yoke."

A highly satisfactory conclusion—at all events from Sargon's point of view!

And thus we have read, in the king's own words, two accounts of the expedition referred to in Isaiah.

The apparent discrepancy between the Biblical statement that the Turtan came to Ashdod, and Sargon's story, in which he speaks of everything as his own doing, need cause us no surprise. Assyrian kings were in the habit of appropriating the glory of their generals' exploits. "L'état c'est moi" was nowhere so true a boast as on the lips of an Assyrian monarch.

Having thus crushed the rebellion in the extreme west of his empire, Sargon could now turn his whole attention to a matter which had long required his presence.

The expedition this time was against Babylon. There is no need to dwell upon it at any length. Yet we cannot wholly pass it over, since the object of the campaign was the overthrow of a man whose name is well known to every reader of the Old Testament—viz. the Merodach-baladan, whose embassy to King Hezekiah forms so striking an episode in the history of that ruler as given in our Bibles (2 Kings xx.; Isaiah xxxix.).

As we read the records of Assyria in the cuneiform texts relating to this period, Merodach-baladan (less correctly Berodach-baladan in

2 Kings xx. 12) seems, like Louis XIV., to be always before us. He first appears in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. When Sargon is on the throne, he seizes the crown of Babylon, and reigns there for twelve years before he can be dislodged. Sargon, however, drives him at last to the marshes at the mouth of the Great Rivers—his ancestral home—and there crushes him. But though utterly defeated, he manages to escape with his life; and the irrepressible Chaldæan reappears in the reign of Sennacherib. Again he seizes the throne of Babylon, and again he is driven out. Not till the fifth year of King Sennacherib does the brave old hero, worn out by the toils of a thirty years' conflict with Assyria, finally retire from the scene, and abandon in despair the dream, which had so long sustained him, of re-constructing an independent Chaldæan empire.

And now, before taking leave of King Sargon, we must devote a few moments to a very great and important work which he accomplished in his own land. This was the construction of a new royal city, and a new palace.

Palace-building had always had a powerful attraction for Assyrian monarchs, and the love of such work may be regarded as an hereditary passion with them. In no other way could they so forcibly impress upon their own and subsequent generations a sense of their mightiness and glory, and their power to compel myriads of human beings to do their behests, and contribute to their fame.

The Assyrian nation had, too, a special genius for architecture, and a love of embodying thoughts and feelings in a symbolism of stone.

The earliest capital of Assyria seems to have been the city of Asshur, situated in the southern part of the country, to the whole of which it gradually extended its name. After Asshur, Kalah (the Calah of the Bible) became the capital, and so continued until the time of Sargon. This monarch resolved to build a new royal city, and when it was completed, he called it, after his own name, Dûr-Sharukîn—*i.e.* the Fortress of Sargon.

"Day and night," he tells us, "I planned the building of that city, and gave orders to erect within it a sanctuary for the Sun-god, the great judge of the great gods, who caused me to gain victory." And again: "Day and night I planned and arranged for the peopling of that city, and the erection of sanctuaries as the dwelling of the great gods, and palaces as the seat of my sovereignty; and I gave orders for the work (to be commenced)."

The site he selected was that of a very ancient town which had once flourished at the foot of a mountain a few miles to the north of Nineveh, but which, owing to the neglect, and consequent choking up, of its canal, had fallen into utter ruin.

To us moderns a special interest attaches to the new city planted there by Sargon, for it now lies entombed in the mound of Khorsabad, which was

excavated in 1842 by Monsieur Botta, and was the first place to yield in quantity those wonderful Assyrian discoveries which have so distinguished our own century. Not only was it the first spot where important excavations were made, but many of the very finest monuments which now adorn the museums of Europe came from this Khorsabad mound.

Sargon commenced the work in B.C. 712—*i.e.* in the tenth year of his reign. We have already seen that in his eleventh year the revolt of Ashdod was suppressed, and it is very probable that his reason for entrusting that matter to his Turtan (as we are told in Isaiah that he did) was his desire to be at home, that he might personally and on the spot superintend the building work in which he felt so deep an interest. The point seems to afford an indirect confirmation of the accuracy of the Biblical statement.

Assyrian kings had a great love of parks, and felt special pleasure in imitating in these enclosures the forest-scenery of the mountainous parts of their own and foreign lands. So Sargon began his great undertaking by planting round the site of the city he was about to create a vast artificial forest, in which, he says, was "every kind of timber that grows in the land of Khatti (*i.e.* the west-country), and every kind of mountain herbs."

There seems to have been a botanical interest underlying this, which reminds us of the Hebrew

monarch and builder, Solomon, who "spake of trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." We may just note, in passing, that the cedars of Lebanon are repeatedly referred to in Assyrian inscriptions.

Sargon took great care that the prosperity of his new city should not be imperilled by any violence or wrong-doing which might call down upon it the anger of the gods. It is pleasant, amid so much that is repulsive in the annals of Assyrian royalty, to note this moral sensitiveness and appreciation of justice on the part of King Sargon. He bought at a fair price the ground he had selected: and, in giving us an account of this, he plays on his own name, saying:

"In accordance with the name I bear" (for the name Sargon can be so read in Assyrian as to mean "the faithful king"), "and which the great gods conferred upon me that I might defend right and justice, direct the powerless, and not harm the weak, I paid in silver and copper the price of the land for that city, according to the tablets appraising its value, to the owners thereof; and, in order to do no wrong, I gave to those who did not wish money for their land, a piece of ground situated opposite to their original property."

He goes on to tell us how every part of the work, including the making of the bricks and the laying of the foundation, was accompanied by solemn religious services, prayer, sacrifices, the

pouring out of libations, and the uplifting of pious hands, and how, for these things, specially holy days, in months sacred to appropriate divinities, were selected.

First rose the temples of various great gods. Then followed the palace, which was constructed of ivory, palmwood, cedar, cypress, and other valuable timber, with "a vestibule after the manner of a Hittite palace"; and the doors were of palm and cypress wood, overlaid with shining bronze.

Of the city, which formed a kind of vast adjunct to the palace, little remains visible at the present day, save traces of well-paved streets. Sargon tells us that it had fortified walls, the foundation of which rested on the solid rock, and eight gates named after the principal gods, a pair facing each cardinal point. These gates must have been truly magnificent, each having on either side pairs of colossal bulls, some set in the panelled wall, and others striding in profile right and left.

In the closing invocation we read:

"May Asshur, the father of the gods, look favourably upon that city and palace with the radiance of his bright face, and grant the renewal of them in far distant days! . . . May the protecting bull and the prospering god rule therein day and night!"

As for the palace itself, no Assyrian ruin has been so well preserved as this, and none, therefore, has been so carefully studied and described.

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Fig. 23.—RESTORATION OF A GATE-WAY AT DUR-SHARUKIN.

Not only are the sculptures of extraordinary richness and variety, displaying in stone every phase and circumstance of King Sargon's life, and many a characteristic of the countries with which he waged war, but their mere quantity is something astounding. On the outside walls were twenty-four pairs of colossal bulls in high relief, and along the inner walls of the halls at least two miles of sculptured slabs! Of course, such a statement as this, as though we were to estimate pictures by the number of yards of canvas they cover, gives no idea of the artistic value of these sculptures; but it conveys some notion of the amount of labour expended on them, and becomes all the more astonishing when we recollect that the whole work, from the construction of the platform to the final ornamentation of the walls with slabs, which were sculptured in their places, was performed in five years. The foundation, as we have seen, was laid in B.C. 712, and in B.C. 707 Sargon entered his palace to live in it.

That so large a number of artists and skilled workmen, as this fact implies, could be brought together, is a proof that the king did not simply exercise arbitrary power over a vast collection of ignorant slaves, but ruled a people among whom the arts had been long and widely cultivated, and who had attained in them a high degree of proficiency.

In a special month, and on an appropriate day, the city and palace were consecrated, and the gods

and goddesses of the land honoured with costly gifts.

Probably not till then were the people, destined to become the inhabitants of the city, permitted to take up their abode there.

Whence did all these folk come? we may be inclined to ask. The movements of populations usually follow natural laws, and cannot be effected with suddenness by any man's caprice. But an Assyrian king always had plenty of experience in these forced migrations; and we learn from 2 Kings xvii. that the conqueror of Samaria, who was this very Sargon, carried away the Israelites from their own land to various cities of his empire, and "brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel."

So, with regard to the new city of Dûr-Sharukîn, he found no difficulty whatever, and he thus describes the measures adopted:

"People from the four quarters of the world, of foreign tongues and various speech, who had dwelt in mountain and plain, wheresoever the Warrior of the gods, the lord of all, bears sway, and whom I, in the name of Asshur my lord, by the might of my arms had carried into captivity, I commanded to speak one language, and settled them therein. Sons of Asshur (*i.e.* Assyrians), of wise insight into all things, learned men and scribes, I set over them to keep watch over the fear of God and the King."

Thus, with perfect ease, and without any contests with an obstinate parliamentary opposition, Sargon carried out his great migration scheme in Dûr-Sharukîn.

Assyrian monarchs, as we have already seen, rarely suffered from an excess of modesty in their personal declarations; but Sargon, whatever he may have been towards his enemies, seems to have had such a high sense of duty towards his own subjects, that it was with little exaggeration that he thus described himself on one of his cylinders:

"The busy (or, perhaps, prudent) king, the bearer of gracious words, who devoted his attention to the re-peopling of ruined spots, the cultivation of the soil, and the planting of reeds; who applied his mind to make high rocks, on which from the earliest times no vegetation had sprouted, to bear crops; who set his heart on causing waste places, which under former kings had never known an irrigation-canal, to yield produce, and resound with shouts of gladness, . . . on opening dams, and giving drink in all directions from the fertilising waters as from a swelling flood; the king of wide intelligence and keen sight in all things, . . . grown up in counsel, wisdom, and discernment, to fill the store-houses of the broad land of Asshur with food and provisions to overflowing, as befits the King, . . . not to let oil, that confers vigour on man and heals sores, grow dear in my land, and to regulate the price of sesame as well as of wheat."

In the invocation which concludes the account of the building of his new city and palace, Sargon prays that he may be himself blessed with many years of life, and attain old age in health of body and gladness of heart.

But the prayer was not fulfilled. Fifteen months after the consecration of the city-walls an unknown assassin laid the great king low.

Was this the result of a palace-intrigue? Or was the murderer one of those many foreigners planted by Sargon in the new city? We are not informed. But the second case seems far from improbable. Possibly even an Israelite, burning with hatred to the subjugator of his native land, proved himself the avenging Nemesis, and struck the fatal blow.

And, as we leave this mighty monarch amid the trophies of his glory, we may ask ourselves once more, Is it not strange that, until half-a-century ago, the little notice in Isaiah was the sole record of his existence known in the world?

But if Sargon was, until lately, a mere name, we cannot say quite the same of his son and successor Sennacherib. Yet here, too, it is the Bible almost alone which has, previously to recent discoveries in Assyria, maintained the memory of this important ruler; and as we now devote a few minutes' attention to Sennacherib, we shall find that the picture we have of him in the Old Testament is not only vivid and life-like, but that it commemorates a by no means insignificant episode in his career.

Sennacherib, as just stated, was a son of Sargon. The Assyrian names of people, like those of the Hebrews, generally had a meaning. Sin-akhê-irbâ signifies "The Moon-god increases brethren," and this word, with but slight change of pronunciation, became in the mouths of the Jews the familiar name Sennacherib.

This king seems to have turned his back upon the city of Dûr-Sharukîn, so recently founded by his father, possibly because the scene of Sargon's murder was fraught with too unpleasant memories, and the son dreaded lest he might himself fall there by a similar fate. He devoted his attention to the neglected city of Nineveh, restoring it to far more than its former grandeur, and erecting there the most imposing palace ever reared by an Assyrian monarch.

We must not at present dwell upon these matters, nor need we enter into any particulars of the wars which Sennacherib waged in many directions. Like most Assyrian kings, he was a great warrior. Yet the number of his campaigns, with which we are at present acquainted, only amounts to eight or nine, covering a period of nineteen years out of the total twenty-four of his reign, which extended from B.C. 705 to 681. And of these campaigns the only one necessary for us to consider is that which brought him into collision with Hezekiah, King of Judah.

Probably we have all a pretty clear recollection of this story as related in 2 Kings xviii.-xix. We

remember how "in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah did Sennacherib King of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them"; how Hezekiah sent to the King of Assyria to Lachish, saying "I have offended," and submitted to such a heavy tribute that he had to cut off the very gold from the doors of the temple, and to take the silver from his own treasury in order to meet the demand of the exacting Assyrian; how Sennacherib sent to Jerusalem from Lachish, with a great host, "Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh"; and with what insolent defiance the last of these high functionaries summoned the city to surrender, speaking not to the rulers but to the mass of the people "in the Jews' language," and asking contemptuously, "Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Henah, and Ivah? Have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand . . . that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" We remember, further, how the words of the taunting Assyrian struck King Hezekiah with dismay, but how the prophet Isaiah, who was not only his spiritual adviser, but his prime-minister too, strove hard to raise the drooping spirits of both king and people by his language of high hope and confidence in Jehovah. Then we call to mind the letter sent by the Assyrian after the advance of the Ethiopian King Tirhakah, and how Hezekiah in his distress "went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." And finally, we recollect the great catastrophe, and how, when all

human help seemed vain, "the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four score and five thousand"; and, in the magnificent language of Byron,

> "The might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
> Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."

Such, in brief outline, is the story with which we have been familiar from childhood. Let us now spend a moment in ascertaining to what extent this narrative is in agreement with, and receives corroboration from, the records of Assyria.

One of the best-preserved historical documents which have been found among the ruins of Nineveh is a clay prism of hexagonal form, usually called the Taylor Cylinder. It may at any time be seen in one of the upper Assyrian galleries of the British Museum, and from its uninjured condition, as well as the importance of its inscription, is greatly valued by all who interest themselves in these matters.

A representation of this cylinder is given opposite p. 24 of the present volume.

When the minute cuneiform signs which cover all the six faces are deciphered, we learn that the campaign with which we are at present concerned was Sennacherib's third expedition, probably in the fifth year of his reign, and that its object was to crush a general rising which threatened to take place, with the help of the Ethiopian King of

Egypt, among the various states that bordered the Mediterranean coast. Tirhakah, the Ethiopian king, whose name we found to occur in the Biblical account, was to invade Palestine, and then a mighty combined effort was to be made to throw off the Assyrian yoke. But news of the insurrection was brought to Nineveh; and the Assyrian army was speedily on the march.

The first portion of the campaign was devoted to the reduction of those Phœnician and Philistine cities, which, headed by Sidon and Ashkelon, and relying on the help of Judah and Egypt, had revolted from Assyria.

"In my third campaign," says Sennacherib, on the Taylor Cylinder, "I advanced to the land of Syria. Lulî (Elulæus), the King of Sidon, was overwhelmed by dread of the awful splendour of my sovereignty, and fled away into the sea; and I reduced his land to obedience. His strong cities" (eight are named, including Great and Little Sidon and Sarepta), "fortresses, pasture and watering-places, and entrenchments (?) were overwhelmed by the might of the arms of Asshur my lord, and submitted to my feet. I set Tubahlu (Ethbaal) on the royal throne over them, and imposed upon him an annual unchangeable tribute to my sovereignty."

He then tells us how he reduced the other cities of the Phœnician and Philistine sea-board, and adds:

"As for Tsidkâ, King of Ashkelon, who had

not submitted to my yoke, the gods of his ancestral house, himself, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his brothers, and the seed of his house, I dragged forth and brought to Assyria."

Sennacherib now advanced to Lachish, which he besieged and took. It is true that no mention of that city occurs on the Taylor Cylinder; and this portion of the Bible narrative would have remained unconfirmed, but for the discovery of a remarkable bas-relief which is to be seen in the Assyrian basement at the British Museum. This interesting piece of sculpture occupies several slabs which once adorned a hall of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, and was brought to light by Layard. We see upon it the great king seated on an ornamental throne, with his attendants holding the royal parasols, or fly-flappers, over his head. The throne stands upon a piece of rising ground, surrounded by vines and fruit-trees. Other portions of the relief show the battle still continuing, but a high officer, followed by soldiers, stands at the king's footstool introducing a file of captives, who advance in attitudes expressive of submission and entreaty; and, that there may be no mistake as to what it all means, an inscription over the scene expressly says: "Sennacherib, King of the world, King of Assyria, is seated on a throne, and the spoils of Lachish pass before him."

To continue the narrative of the Taylor Cylinder. We now come to a very interesting fact, which, though not mentioned in the Bible, serves to

show the precise part that King Hezekiah had taken in the insurrection, thereby drawing upon himself the wrath of Sennacherib. We read:

"As for the chiefs and high dignitaries and the other inhabitants of Ekron, who had thrown into iron fetters their king, Padî, a man faithful to his oaths and covenant with Assyria, and had handed him over to Hezekiah of Judah—and *he* shut him up in prison like an enemy — their heart failed them. The Kings of Egypt summoned the bowmen, chariots, and horses of the King of Melukhkhi, a countless host, and came to their assistance."

Next follows an account of a battle fought against these combined forces, and Sennacherib claims for himself the victory.

"Then," continues the narrative on the Cylinder, "I advanced upon Ekron. The chiefs and high dignitaries, who had committed the offence, I put to death, and hung up their corpses on posts around the city. The citizens who were guilty of sin and wickedness I carried off into captivity; the rest who had committed no transgression or crime, and were (therefore) innocent, I amnestied. Padî, their king, I brought out of Jerusalem, and set him on the throne to (again) rule over them."

And now we reach the event recorded in the Biblical narrative—viz. the capture by Sennacherib of the fenced cities of Judah.

"And of Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged and captured

forty-six strong cities, the fortresses, and of smaller towns in their neighbourhood a countless number. . . . Two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, I brought out from them, and reckoned as spoil. Himself (Hezekiah) I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city."

We next read that Sennacherib blockaded Jerusalem, and then, handing over the captured cities to neighbouring kings, laid upon Hezekiah a heavy additional tribute. This last, we are told, the Assyrian king caused to be sent after him to Nineveh, and an envoy was despatched by Hezekiah to convey it, and pay homage to Sennacherib.

Here ends the story as related on the Taylor Cylinder. Are we disappointed to find that there is no mention of the famous "Destruction of Sennacherib," but that, on the contrary, everything is described as having ended well for the Assyrians? We must remember, however, that an Assyrian king never admits a defeat or a disaster; and when we look into the narrative closely we shall, perhaps, see one or two things which do not appear on the surface.

First, then, notice the discrepancy between the Biblical statement that Hezekiah's heavy tribute was paid to Sennacherib while at Lachish, and

the Assyrian account which represents it as sent, at the end of the whole campaign, to Nineveh.

Now, when we consider how candidly the Hebrew historian admits the humiliating fact that an enormous tribute was paid, and that the very gold had to be stripped from the temple doors to discharge it, and also confesses that all the fenced cities of Judah fell into the Assyrian's hands, we cannot deny the great probability of his being accurate with regard to the place where the tribute was paid. But, on the Assyrian side, we can see at once that, supposing Sennacherib's campaign to have had a disastrous close, there was every motive, while saying nothing about this, to round off the story and make a good conclusion, by placing a triumphant account of the tribute at the end. For, we notice, the Taylor Cylinder gives no narrative of the return to Nineveh. There is complete silence on the concluding stages of the campaign, while a boastful statement about the tribute comes in to fill up the gap. The whole Lachish episode also is omitted, possibly for the same reason; yet, that this really took place, we may be certain, quite apart from the mention of it in the Book of Kings, since it forms the subject of Sennacherib's own bas-relief, referred to above.

But again. How was it that Jerusalem was not taken and sacked after all? It certainly was not. Even Sennacherib's narrative, which does not err on the side of moderation, and tells us, indeed, how he shut up Hezekiah "like a caged bird in

Jerusalem, his royal city," says not a word about the capture of Jerusalem, or about any spoil taken therefrom. The reason why Jerusalem was spared cannot have been the merciful character of Sennacherib; for we have read in his own narrative how cruelly he treated the King of Ashkelon, and the conspirators of Ekron, as soon as they severally fell into his hands. Nor can it have been because Hezekiah had taken no important part in the revolt; for he had joined hands with the rebels of Ekron, and committed the unpardonable sin of casting into prison Padî, the faithful ally and representative of the majesty of Assyria. Nor, again, can we attribute the escape of Jerusalem to Sennacherib's contempt for Hezekiah; for the latter was, surely, a more powerful ruler than the King of Ashkelon, who was carried off to Assyria with all his family, and a new king set up in his place. Why, then, was not Hezekiah similarly treated, his city sacked, and his principal men gibbeted round the walls?

We can only answer, Some event must have occurred to check the victorious Assyrian's progress, and bring his military operations, for that year at least, to an abrupt conclusion. That event was very probably the outbreak of pestilence among his troops, ascribed by the Biblical historian, in accordance with Hebrew usage, to an "angel of the Lord."

One remarkable fact serves to corroborate this view. Two hundred and fifty years later, the

Greek historian Herodotus found a tradition still current in Egypt about Sennacherib's attempted invasion of that country. This tradition related that the Egyptian king prayed to the gods for aid, and that the same night a swarm of mice entered the Assyrian camp, and, by destroying the leathern quivers, shield-straps, and bowstrings, so effectually disarmed the invaders, that a great slaughter was made of them. Now, the mouse was always regarded in the East as the emblem of the plague-boil.

Possibly the number of Assyrian troops who perished underwent some exaggeration in later editions of the Biblical narrative. Possibly, too, the story has gained some dramatic effect by the compression into the space of a few hours of what was really spread over a longer time. But the following extract from a leading article which appeared in *The Standard* of 14th September 1893 serves to show that, substantially, the narrative in the Book of Kings does not go very far beyond the actual facts of an occurrence of a similar kind in our own days:—

"The terrible story which we publish this morning relating to the ravages of cholera among the pilgrims to Mecca, will, perhaps, be glanced at and thrown aside by many readers, without its full import being appreciated. But the figures speak for themselves. Of nine thousand pilgrims who sailed from Tunis and adjacent ports last May, more than one half died of cholera either going or

returning, and of those who had started from Tunis only about two thousand returned to tell the tale of their sufferings. . . . It was not till nearly the end of June that the outbreak reached its height, and then its attack seems to have been so rapid as to remind us of the destruction of the Assyrian army before the walls of Jerusalem. The sudden and fearful loss of life on the Sacred Mount, where something like a hundred thousand pilgrims had assembled, might well have been ascribed in more superstitious days to the direct agency of the Almighty. In one night such numbers perished that on the following morning the Mount, according to the telegrams, was like a battlefield. . . . Of seven hundred Turkish troops sent to bury the dead, five hundred died of cholera before their work was done."

With regard to Sennacherib, one more event is recorded in the second Book of Kings. That is the awful manner of his death. "And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead" (2 Kings xix. 37).

What have the cuneiform inscriptions to say about this?

As to the last statement, that Esarhaddon (Asshur-akha-iddin), his son, succeeded him, we

have any amount of Assyrian evidence; but unfortunately the narrative inscriptions of Esarhaddon's reign, which we possess, are few, and the opening lines so sadly mutilated that we cannot find any account in them of Sennacherib's death.

But what we can read is highly suggestive. Where the lines become legible, they seem to show us Esarhaddon preparing to avenge his father's murder. He says: "I tore (my garments?), and uttered (lamentations?). I roared like a lion, my heart cried out"; and "he lifted up his hand to the great gods," vowing "to assume the sovereignty of his father's house."

A favourable oracle from the gods bids him "Go, and linger not; we march at thy side, we overthrow thy foes!" He is quickly on the move, not shrinking before "the frost, cold, and violent storms" of January, and hurrying towards Nineveh.

Soon he meets his enemies (probably the party of his father's murderers) somewhere in the highlands of the Upper Euphrates; which fully agrees with the Biblical statement that the wicked brothers fled to Armenia. An engagement takes place, in which, we are told, "the goddess Ishtar broke the bows, and shattered the battle-line" of Esarhaddon's foes, and throughout their army was heard the cry, "This one is our king!"

Here ends the evidence available for us on this matter, so far as it is supplied by the Assyrian inscriptions at present known. But when we turn from Assyria to Babylon, we come across a most

remarkable piece of documentary proof. This has been only recently discovered, and is contained in what is called the "Babylonian Chronicle." Here we read the definite statement that King Sennacherib, in the course of an insurrection, was slain by his son.

A still more recent discovery—viz. a stele of King Nabû-nahid, found in the neighbourhood of Babylon itself, also contains the distinct declaration, with regard to Sennacherib, that his "son, begotten of his body, laid him low with a weapon."

To these cuneiform statements may be added a precisely similar one by Bêrôssos, as handed on by Alexander Polyhistor, and preserved for us by Eusebius (see p. 82), according to which Sennacherib perished by treachery at the hands of his own son.

The sole discrepancy between the Biblical story and these three accounts from other sources, is that the Hebrew narrative mentions two sons, while all the others speak of one only. But the point is quite immaterial, and the difference probably apparent rather than real; for it may well have been that two sons engaged in the plot, and yet one only struck the fatal blow.

And now we come to our last point of contact between the Biblical and the Assyrian records.

In 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 11-13, we read: "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the King of Assyria, which took Manasseh

among the thorns (or, as the Revised Version more correctly translates, "in chains" or "with hooks"), and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom."

Manasseh, we remember, was the son of Hezekiah, and succeeded his father on the throne of Judah. An account of his life is given in 2 Kings, which is undoubtedly a much older, and therefore historically more valuable record than the Chronicles. No notice occurs in the former book of the events referred to in the verses just given. Hence it has been sometimes asserted that these events are quite unhistorical, especially since three important objections can be raised to the account we have of them. These objections are as follows:—

(1) It is said that at this particular period Assyria and Judah never came into contact at all.

To any one conversant with the clay-tablets of the show-cases of the British Museum this objection is absurd. For one of those tablets is a list of kings tributary to King Asshurbanipal of Assyria, with the countries over which they respectively ruled; and among them we find the words "Manasseh, King of the land of Judah." Asshurbanipal was the son of Esarhaddon, and

on a similar tribute list of Esarhaddon's we also find the name of "Manasseh, King of Judah," mentioned.

The Bible tells us that Manasseh came to the throne at the age of twelve, and reigned fifty-five years. Hence it is most natural that he should appear in connection with at least two Assyrian kings, and from these tribute lists it is clear that Assyria did at this time meddle with the affairs of Judah. But we can go further than this. We can, by reference to Assyrian inscriptions, discover the special offence committed by King Manasseh which brought upon him his punishment. The annals of Asshurbanipal relate that the Assyrian king was engaged, at about the middle of his reign, in a terrible struggle with his brother, Shamash-shum-ukîn, who had been installed as viceroy of Babylon, but had rebelled against him. We are also told that the "Western Land"—*i.e.* Syria and Palestine,—joined in this revolt. Hence it is highly probable that King Manasseh was in the plot, or at least was suspected of taking part in it, and, if so, we see at once the reason of his being carried away by the Assyrians, as stated in the book of Chronicles.

(2) Another objection is raised in the following question:—Why should Manasseh have been carried away to Babylon, when Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and Babylon formed no part of Assyria at all?

In reply to this, we find that during the

course of Asshurbanipal's operations against his rebellious brother, the Assyrian king besieged and captured the city of Babylon. If, therefore, Manasseh was brought away from Jerusalem at that juncture, he would naturally be carried to Babylon, and not to Nineveh, to answer for his conduct before the King of Assyria. And the likelihood of this is increased by our finding, in the records of Sargon, that he, after his conquest of Babylon, received in that city a number of ambassadors who came from Cyprus with costly presents and assurances of submission.

(3) A third objection that has been urged is this: that it is most improbable that a king, after being treated with such indignities as are said to have been heaped upon Manasseh, should have been pardoned, and allowed to return to his own kingdom.

To this it may be answered that we are able, curiously enough, to point to a very similar case which also occurred in the reign of this very Asshurbanipal.

In the narrative of his first Egyptian war, the Assyrian king relates that the tributary princes appointed by his father Esarhaddon to govern Egypt, rebelled, that several of them were overthrown and captured, and that one, Necho, prince of Sais, was cast into bonds and fetters of iron (just like Manasseh), and brought as a prisoner to Nineveh. But Asshurbanipal hoped to accomplish more by indulgence than he could have

done by cruelty. He not only set his captive free, but put a costly robe on him, decked him with ornaments of gold, girt him with a sword of honour in a golden sheath, and sent him back well equipped with chariots, horses, and mules, to his kingdom in Egypt. He also despatched with him a few high officers to restore him to his former dignity; and no doubt these gentlemen were also charged to keep a vigilant eye upon his actions. What, then, King Asshurbanipal certainly did in the case of Necho, he might also do in the case of Manasseh. Thus, the third objection to the statement in the Chronicles seems completely disposed of.

Esarhaddon, as we have seen, was followed on the throne of Assyria by his son Asshurbanipal. Twenty years after the death of the latter king the Empire itself fell. She may be almost said to have fallen by her own weight. Her tyrannical and overbearing policy had raised enemies for her on every side, who only waited for an opportunity to effect her ruin.

At last, in about B.C. 606, a combination of two of her ancient foes, the Babylonians and the Medes, overthrew the mighty colossus. Merodach-baladan was avenged, and what he had vainly dreamed, now proved a reality.

A few more years elapsed, and the little kingdom of Judah also succumbed.

The storm of Babylonian conquest, which had

swept away the great cedar, did not spare the hyssop on the wall.

The northern Hebrew kingdom, Israel, had, as we have seen, fallen long before by the prowess of Assyria. Now it was Judah's turn, and we all know the story of Nebuchadnezzar's ruthless conquest.

Thus, Asshur and Israel were both laid low. But how different was their fate!

Great Assyria sank to rise no more; her wound was incurable, her ruin irretrievable.

But the little Hebrew nation, though sorely chastened, was not destroyed.

Taught by the long discipline of the Captivity, she at last purged herself of her idolatries. The remnant that returned to the soil of Palestine, though never again a political force in the world, had an intellectual and spiritual mission to perform, to which all the after-history of man has borne witness.

In conclusion, it may be observed that the points dealt with in this chapter refer exclusively to that period of history during which the kings reigned in Israel and Judah, or, more strictly, to that portion of the regal period which extended from Ahab to Manasseh—*i.e.* about two centuries and a half.

The results to which we are led by such a study as that just completed, may be thus summed up:

(1) As regards the broad outlines, or skeleton,

of the history, the cuneiform inscriptions amply attest the general accuracy of the Hebrew records of the period in question.

(2) As to the Biblical chronology (upon which, as a subject not generally attractive, nothing has been said above), the statements of the books of Kings cannot always be reconciled with those of the Assyrian records.

(3) As regards the greater part of the Biblical narratives, such as the details of Hebrew history, the lives of the prophets, and the miraculous element pervading the books of the Old Testament, the cuneiform inscriptions have nothing whatever to tell us. They offer on such points neither confirmation nor contradiction, but leave things precisely as they were.

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